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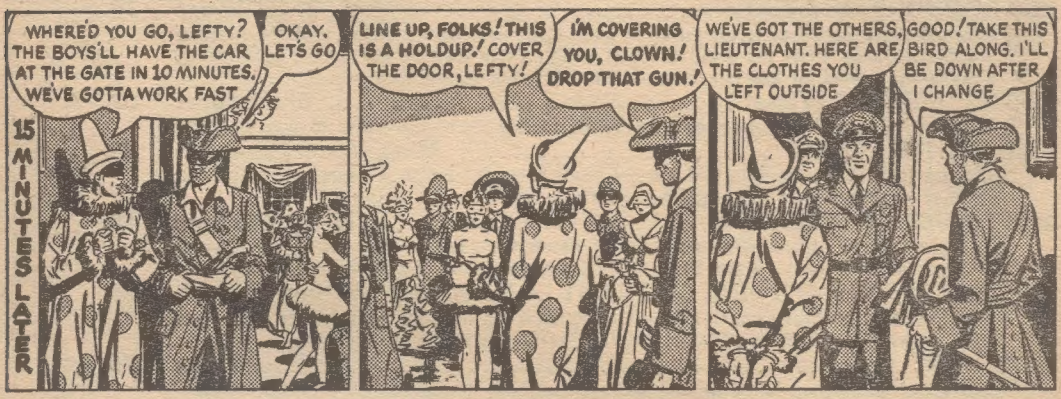
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BUT, DAD, HOW...?
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Adventure

(Registered U. S. Patent Office)

February, 1949

CONTENTS

Vol. 120, No. 4

RED ROUNDUP *(A Novelette)*.....R. G. Emery 10
When Colonel Matt Frayne turned up in John McQueen's particular neck of the Alaskan woods, McQueen knew the Security Chief wasn't there just for the fishing or hunting. Frayne was loaded for bear all right—but not the four-legged variety.

POSTED MISSING *(Verse)*.....Bill Adams 39
It's a hell of a deal in a deep-sea ship, When there's scarce the water to wet your lip.

SAY IT WITH PEARLS.....Allan Vaughan Elston 40
Captain Carr of the Dolphin had worked the scheme for ten long years, and it seemed flawless—as flawless as the pearls he had stolen one by one.

THE TOWER OF LONDON.....Philip Ketchum 50
The great Tower still stands—a symbol of power for good or evil—as in the days of William of Normandy, when Brian Dacre, serf, changed the course of history.

CAPTAIN McCARGO'S PINK ELEPHANT *(A Novelette)*..William Ratigan 60
In which the fabulous skipper of the Minong sails his light-footed schooner into a sea of trouble in the shape of pink pachyderms, petticoats and violent death.

DOG MAN.....William Fuller 76
Rand had killed men in battle and the act had been mechanical. He had often wondered how it would feel to kill of his own volition. . . .

LEYTE MOON.....Leslie Bigelow 84
He was a nondescript man—the stranger I played chess with in a Toledo YMCA—but the tale he told me was as lurid as anything that came out of the war.

THE MAN WHO WOULD NEVER STAY THROWN *(A Fact Story)*.....Louis A. Sigaud 94
In his tempestuous career, "Old Hickory" risked his life many times on the field of honor —yet he lived to be President, and die in bed.

DEEP HOLE.....Clifton Adams 102
It was a long way from Venezuela to Oklahoma for my new job as driller for World Oil —and a hell of a long way to run into a boss like Spade McCoy.

MORE VENOMOUS OF THE TWO.....D. K. Findlay 110
Dr. Quest's giant python had escaped and it was up to the herpetologist to track him down, though a greater danger waited in the swamp where the reptile lay hiding.

THE CAMP-FIRE.....Where readers, writers and adventurers meet 6

THE TRAIL AHEAD.....News of next month's issue 115

ASK ADVENTURE.....Information you can't get elsewhere 116

ASK ADVENTURE EXPERTS.....The men who furnish it 120

LOST TRAILS.....Where old paths cross 125

Cover painted for Adventure *by Charles Dye*

Kendall W. Goodwyn, Editor

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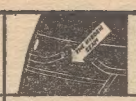
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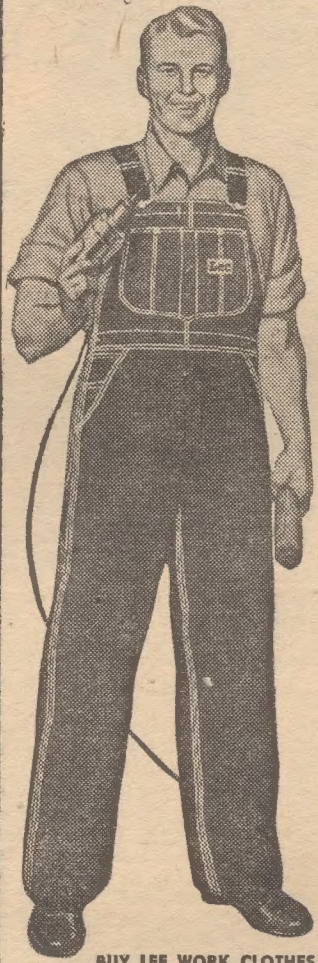

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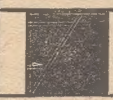
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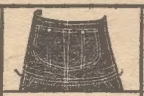
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THE CAMP-FIRE

Where Readers, Writers and Adventurers Meet

TO CELEBRATE the return of that lusty character, Thunder Bay McCargo, skipper of the Great Lakes schooner *Minong* (see "Captain McCargo's Pink Elephant" elsewhere in this issue), we append the following footnotes by his creator, William Ratigan, who explains how the latest McCargo opus came to be written. Incidentally, aren't these writers the darndest people? When we get our few remaining hairs trimmed at the neighborhood tonsorial parlor, we're likely to doze off in the chair. But not Ratigan—he comes out not just with a fresh shave and haircut, but with the plot for a new and highly original yarn!

Those who have read the McCargo yarns to date will recognize the serial theme which amounts to a secondary plot action. McCargo builds up a quartet, loses a key singer, attempts by any means to get a substitute so the *Minong* may sail the lakes with four-part harmony.

This theme was suggested by my introduction to Charlevoix, here in the Little Traverse Bay region of Michigan. Fresh from Hollywood, I entered a local barbershop and asked the conventional questions about fishing and hunting. The barber was polite with his answers, but rather absent-minded. It seems that the community quartet—or, to be exact, one of the many community quartets—had lost a bass. Could I sing? That was more important than where the perch or the steelheads were biting or where the bucks were bedded down.

I quickly discovered that many of the rabid residents of Charlevoix hold themselves in all year and then explode all over the place during the annual Jamboree on Labor Day weekend. Dozens of barbershop quartets, invited from a cross-section of the United States, serenade the town—from the park, from boats, from rumpus-room basements, from tight little circles around telegraph poles and lamp-posts, from everywhere.

Today I proudly carry a card certifying that I am a member of the SPEBSQSA—the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America. In the words on the reverse side of my card: "The Society aspires to preserve for its members and for all future generations of prospective members the sacred right of men to seek haven from the burden of their daily cares through indulgence in old-fashioned vocal quartet harmony."

I'll bet quite a few others around this *Camp-Fire* belong to the SPEBSQSA. They could tell its story better than I can. Among its members, the Society numbers such stalwarts as Bing Crosby, Abbott and Costello, and President Truman.

But, getting back to the barber's question—could I sing? I said nope. He wouldn't believe it. Such a thing was incredible—in Charlevoix. He invited me to a meeting of the Society. The gang chose up a quartet and included me in. I opened my mouth for a few bars. Then the barber believed me. I slunk away from the platform. They were nice about it, treating me as if I had some incurable ailment which, fortunately, was not catching. Now, at the meetings, I hang on the outskirts listening to that most democratic of all outbursts—the barber shop quartet, where, likely as not, a fishtug deckhand, a retired millionaire, a dentist, and a garbage collector will forget social distinctions in the interests of harmony. In fact, a town ne'er-do-well is likely to bawl hell out of the banker for not holding the right note.

I forgot to say that, when they invited me to join up, I told them they'd better have a ventriloquist handy to help me out. It would be the only way to make me carry a tune. Sometime later, while out fishing, I toyed around with the idea of a person being unable to sing. Eventually, in my imagination I dressed myself up in a pretty pair of pantalettes to tempt McCargo's fancy—and from there on the yarn took shape, ventriloquist, pink elephant, and all.

The joke was on Captain McCargo, but I

(Continued on page 8)

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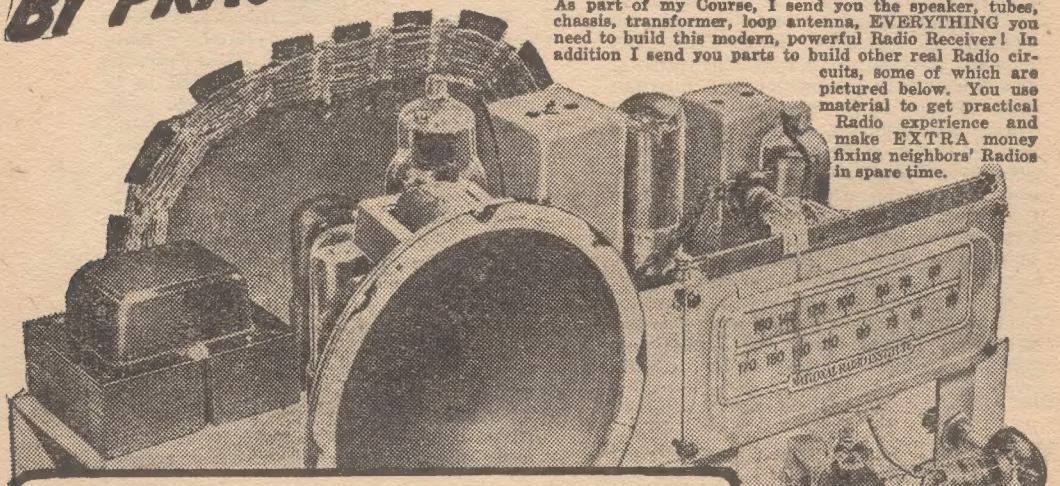

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(Continued from page 6)

reckon it's really on me in the final analysis. I still can't carry a tune from here to Cap'n Sparhawk's cuspidor in the Steamboat Hotel.

As for historical data, I don't know how many times abortive expeditions set out to capture Canada, with Hunters Lodges and War Hawks on our side and Patriot Parties and malcontents on the other mutually interested in the deal. Incidentally, that Women's Declaration of Rights delivered at The Seneca Falls Convention is a hilarious piece of copy in its entirety. Cholera, of course, was rampant on the lakes at the time, and most of the patent medicines were liberally stiffened with alcohol. P. T. Barnum did have an elephant on exhibition in Cleveland, and it's quite possible that Sparhawk staked him to his first midget. Barnum, who made a fortune off suckers, served an apprenticeship as the biggest sucker of all—the typical rube who invested in fake watches, phony fire extinguishers, and cures for baldness. He finally went broke and wrote a best seller on how to make money!

WE ENJOYED the story of the post-V-J Day Philippines by Leslie Bigelow on page 84 and hope you'll like it, too. Having spent a few l-o-n-g months there ourselves at that time, we got a kick out of the authentic background of "Leyte Moon" and we are inclined to agree with Mr. Bigelow that a lot of us would have got a very different impression of the "Flips"—as we rather rudely referred to them—under happier circumstances. Here's what the author has to say—

After V-J Day the Command's job was over, and many of us were sent overseas to relieve the men who had done the work. I was assigned to an Air Service Group on southern Leyte, where I rejoiced in the various titles of Mess Officer, Adjutant of Headquarters Squadron, Supply Officer, Historical Officer, Information and Education Officer, Labor Control Officer and so on. Just before I came back, I reached the dizzy eminence of Commanding Officer of an engineering squadron composed of two persons, myself and a lad I never saw.

It was on Leyte and in our work of folding up the outfit that I saw some of the things which suggested the story, which is of course completely unrelated to any actual happening, but which, except for the complication of the scheme, pretty well reflects much of what went on.

We were in an odd and tempting position. When we had accounted for all the property with which we were charged, there was a mountain of stuff left over which really could not be turned in. Army regulations forbade the sale of it, which was sensible enough, and also the gift of it, which in view of the desperate need of the Filipinos was not specially sensible. To play perfectly safe, one would have to burn it up. Let me say somewhat ambiguously that the property for which I was responsible was not burnt or otherwise destroyed, nor was it sold.

Of course, much material was sold. Some gentlemen in fairly exalted place came home with more money than their pay or gambling would explain, and, frankly, I used to be pretty annoyed at whatever idiot compunctions they were which kept me from lining my own pockets. But I sleep well, and probably they were good old compunctions at that.

Especially in retrospect I have been much interested in the Filipinos. I say in retrospect, because at the time itself we were all so itchy to come home, and so annoyed at the constant petty thievery of the Filipinos, natural enough in view of their want and our plenty, that we were merely exasperated, not inquisitive. I particularly remember several of the Filipinos who helped me in my labor office, splendid men, poised and gracious. I should like very much to meet them again one day in happier circumstances.

ON JOINING the *Camp-Fire* this month, Louis A. Sigaud—who contributes the fact story about that fabulous figure in American history, "Old Hickory" (see page 94)—writes entertainingly concerning some of his own experiences—

I was inflicted upon an already harassed world in Jersey City over half a century ago, and have since done my share to add to the general confusion. I studied law languidly at N.Y.U. and in the Wilson campaign of 1912 consorted with Joe Davies, Hank Morgenthau and such when they were really starry-eyed.

Admitted to the bar, I invaded World War I through the Medical Corps and came to at Pershing's headquarters in command of the Corps of Intelligence Police and the Corps of Interpreters. Crossing an original gift of gab with the military need to keep my mouth shut resulted inevitably in a neurosis cured eventually by eruption into print. But first, in various executive assignments along financial, legal and accounting lines, I hampered effectively operations of The Irving National Bank, The Army & Navy Club of America and an electric appliance corporation. In my spare time I acquired a wife and several dogs and cats. But my progeny has been merely literary.

In 1935 I prophesied in *The American Mercury* that France would fall and in 1938 translated for E. P. Dutton the French manuscript on which was based Belbenoit's best-seller "Dry Guillotine" describing his

(Continued on page 122)

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RED ROUNDUP

By

R. G. EMERY

McQueen and Jameson stared at the great, black leviathan which broke the shimmering water close beside the anchored vessel.

ILLUSTRATED BY MONROE EISENBERG

McQUEEN surveyed his domain and found it good. Resting, glass in hand, at an easy angle in a low-slung deck chair, feet on his porch railing, he had the broad sheet of Iliuk Arm spread out before him, blue water shimmering under the warm August sun. The two-engined float job moored to the finger pier at the water's edge was close enough to show the "Naknek Sportsmen's Club" gaily lettered in yellow on its red fuselage.

It was the Sportsmen's Club McQueen was sitting on. The last nail had been driven within the week. To his left along the wide veranda, a door opened into the bar with the dining room and kitchen beyond. Ten paces the other way, another door gave access to the big bunk-room. The rear wing, around the corner, had a pair of private bedrooms for VIP's and living quarters for McQueen and his superannuated two-man staff, Charley Jameson and Jake Johnson. Since he had gotten the last shake shingle permanently in place, McQueen had found himself feeling like the sideshow midget who married the fat lady. It was a thing of which he had long been dreaming and now it was finally his, all his.

Not quite all, of course. Uncle Sugar

had a stake in it, too. During the war, the Army had successfully hidden the construction of an entire airbase by consigning all tools and materials to an imaginary civilian cannery. The project had been masked well enough so that the Japs had come ploughing in for their head-on attack at Dutch Harbor, in 1942, secure in the knowledge that there were no land-based aircraft within helping distance; a mistake which had made *kamikazes* out of a goodly number of Nip pilots long before their time or intention.

The brass had kept that in mind. Such a workable expedient deserved further attention. Consequently the total of tonnage which had, during the past year, been flown and floated into Naknek Lake and its tributary Iliuk Arm, and consigned to the "Naknek Sportsmen's Club" would have been startling to an innocent bystander, had there been any such, innocent or otherwise. McQueen got about one percent of it to build his club. The rest went on up the Arm under the perpetual cloud cover over the intermittently active cone of Mt. Katmai and its surrounding Valley of Smokes.

WHAT the Army was doing up there, McQueen didn't care to guess. The red planes belonged to the government and about five out of each hundred of the passengers they brought in were legitimate customers of McQueen's. The rest also went on up the Arm, disappearing into the fog. They reappeared once in a while; uniformly young, tight-lipped men who came down for a night to play the juke box and drink sparingly at the bar. Whatever they were up to back in the hills, McQueen thought it must be pretty rugged if they considered the juke box and one or two drinks recreation.

They made hunting and fishing trips, too, but never with paying customers. Always by themselves, two and three at a time, and when McQueen or Charley Jameson were available to take them.

At the moment, the place was empty of guests, bona fide or otherwise. Jameson and Jake Johnson, McQueen's other guide, were wrangling over their interminable checker game at the other end of the porch. Two-thirds of the way through their first fifth of the day, they were in the preliminary stages of inventing a new game. Charley was playing the red men on the black squares and Jake, the black men on the red. By the sounds, the project wasn't going to be worth copyrighting.

Somewhere around, a plane's engines sounded, high and far-off. McQueen cocked an experienced eye at the saw-edged horizon to the northeast. In a moment, the red ship came in sight, twisting through the pass between Mt. Douglas and Kamishak, where an offshoot of the mighty Aleutian Range ran down to the sea at the head of Shelikof Strait.

McQueen said, "Hey, you two! Better drink up. Looks like business coming."

Both checker players reached for the bottle at once. It was a dead heat. They glared at each other briefly. Jameson reluctantly relinquished his priority and turned a severe, red-rimmed eye on McQueen.

"Let's git it straight right off, Johnny. No goats. Moose 'r bear 'r sheep, it's all right with me. But no goats. It's gittin' chilly o' nights over in that Alaska Range."

"And you're not the man you used to be?"

Old Jake brought the bottle down and wiped his whiskers, happily. In the beatitude of the moment, he forgot himself to the extent of agreeing with Charley.

"Who is? I'll put in with Red-eye on that. I never did see the day I was young enough to really 'preciate scramblin' up the side of a mount'in, clawin' my way through alder bushes ever' step, jest for a measly damn goat. These pilgrims don't know what they're gittin' into when they want to go. After they find out, it's allus your fault fer not tellin' 'em."

McQueen said, "Well, don't holler until you're hurt. Maybe these characters will only want to go fishing."

He hoisted his long, heavy-shouldered length from the deck chair and stepped off the porch, starting down the path to the finger pier. Around the corner, Mrs. Bertha Egegik, chief of the kitchen staff, was harvesting her garden.

She called to McQueen, "You come tell

me how many." Hoisting a wash-tub sized cabbage to a well-padded shoulder, she waddled around the corner out of sight.

Charley Jameson craned his neck over the porch railing. "Besides," he said, "it's time I was gittin' a couple days off in Anchorage. I ketch myself tryin' to peek in Bertha's winder, last night."

"You and Jake have been trying to make time with Bertha all summer, and you know it," McQueen told him. "She says it's getting so she's afraid to stay here alone with either of you."

He was watching the red plane breasting up to the pier on the opposite side of its mate already moored there. Recognizing the lean, red-bearded figure who made an agile leap from float to pier, carrying a mooring line, he said, "Oh, oh! This looks like trouble."

Scout Sergeant Littledog, he of the red beard, looped his line expertly about the mooring bitt and waved to McQueen. McQueen waved back. He was watching the tall man in Army uniform who followed Littledog across the float to the pier. Colonel Matt Frayne, the Area Security chief. Now McQueen knew it was trouble.

He went down the path. Frayne, coming up, put out a big hand.

"Hello, McQueen. How are things over here?"

"Peaceful," McQueen told him, meaningfully.

"I hoped so. That's why I came. Have you got a drink you've managed to keep hid from Charley and Jake?"

Resignedly, McQueen led the way back to the porch. Sergeant Littledog trailed them. Something passed in a look between the red-bearded scout and his tall, lantern-jawed boss. Littledog stopped at the steps and spoke to Johnson.

"Hi, Jake. Git out the kicker and let's put her on the dory. I promised the mess back at Richardson that I'd bring back five, six rainbows."

Jake muttered, looking over at the bottle. "They ain't hittin'. Hain't had a strike out in the lake fer a month. Too danged many airplanes spurtin' around."

"Well, I got to bring back either trout meat or Norwegian," Littledog told him equably. "Take your choice."

Grumbling, old Jake heaved himself up and limped down the steps. McQueen watched them go down and shove the dory off the shingle beside the pier. He grinned once, and then thought better of it. Charley Jameson was a full-time Security employee. In fact, he had been on the local Army payroll longer than either McQueen or Frayne. Jake was not. The maneuver to get him out of earshot was too transparent. Again, it looked like a nuisance. Sighing, McQueen went in to the bar to pour the drinks.

FRAYNE, comfortably ensconced in McQueen's own deck chair, took his glass, swallowed once and then echoed McQueen's sigh. "This is the prettiest damn spot I ever saw, over here, Johnny. After the war, how about taking me in as a partner?"

"If there's anything left of it. Anyway, what war?"

"That's right. What war? Washington sent up a directive the other day, saying we should spank everybody who used the word. It's still just an emergency. The same emergency. Damned if it isn't getting monotonous, though."

McQueen grunted. He was reasonably sure that Frayne hadn't flown from Fort Richardson at Anchorage over the mountains to Naknek to drink, fish, or make conversation about the international situation. The colonel these days was a busy man. McQueen waited.

Frayne took another pull at his drink. He said, "Bear season's open soon, isn't it, Johnny?"

"Next month."

"Thinking of going out?"

Jameson came out from the bar, a new fifth in his hand. He hauled his chair over on Frayne's other side, resting the bottle easily available at his side. McQueen looked at him.

"Charley is. We've got a party from St. Paul coming up, the first week of the season."

"You aren't going along?"

"Unh-uh. I've got another bunch from Seattle coming in for a moose hunt. Charley's the bear specialist, anyway. I got a bellyful of those Kodiaks, last fall."

Frayne nodded. "The time General Douglas was killed. I remember. So you don't think you'd like to go out, this year? Not even on a short trip?"

McQueen said, "All right, Colonel. We might as well take this bear by the tail and look the situation in the face. What kind of a deal are you going to try to sell me?"

Frayne rubbed his head. "I don't rightly know, Johnny. If I did, I wouldn't be circling around you like this. All I really want you to do is drop over to Tugidak Island for a day or two and look around. You could look for bear while you're over there. Locate one, for when the season does open."

"Where the devil is Tugidak Island?"

"In the Trinities. South and west of Kodiak. It's just over the mountains and across the Strait from here."

McQueen looked at Jameson. Charley shook his head. "No bear on Tugidak."

The old guide's expression, where it showed through his whiskers, was peculiar. McQueen noticed it. He asked, "Why not? Bear swim. They're on plenty of islands. How about Montague?"

"I dunno whether brown bear are seagoin' or not. I never see any in water any deeper than their toenails. But you're right they're on islands. Kodiak itself is an island."

Frayne said, "Of course. Then why not on Tugidak?"

Charley shook his head. "Dunno. They jest ain't. Mebbe when the Great Sperrit was distributin' them around, Tugidak was overlooked. And if bear used to git around by hookin' rides in Aleut umiaks, they shore wouldn't have got to Tugidak that way, either."

"Why?"

"No Aleut would go near the place."

"Why not?"

"They thought it was bad medicine. What really happened was that, 'way back, a Rooshian fur hunting party got wrecked an' had to winter there. Tugidak's got a good harbor—one of the best—and there was an Aleut village. The Rooshians arranged things as was usual in them days by killing all the men and kids. But this was before the Aleuts was quite so beat down as they got to be later, an' a couple of the neighborin' villages got together an' paid a return call. Takin' advantage o' numbers and surprise, they massacreed the Rooshians good. After that, of course, no native would ever go near the place agin. In a while, it got to be a superstition with 'em."

Frayne nodded. "That's the way Littledog tells it."

"It's a common enough story," McQueen said. "What's it got to do with bear? Or with the fact there's no bear?"

"Nothing. It's only that fact I'm interested in. Are there any bear or aren't there?"

"Why?"

THE gaunt Security chief tugged at an outsized ear. He said, soberly, "I kind of hate to admit this, Johnny. But they had the roundup over there last week and the count was short. 'Way short."

"Roundup!" McQueen echoed incredulously. "Roundup of what? Brown bear?"

"Cattle. Beef cattle."

"Cattle! Migod, now I've heard everything."

McQueen looked again to Charley. The old man showed no surprise. He said, "Some fellers put a few head on Tugidak years back, before the war. There was grass, not much snow and no bear. I heard once that they was doin' pretty well. No bear."

"Yes," Frayne agreed, "there is supposed to be no bear. That's why I said I was a little ashamed to admit what's worrying me. These people, from their old head counts, had expected to find close to five hundred head this year, all ages and sizes. They located barely fifty. They found no carcasses, so it wasn't disease. And—as Jameson says—if there's no bear . . ."

McQueen took a good pull at his drink. "Rustlers!" he exclaimed, half-derisively.

"I know. Sounds like something out of the comic strips. But think about it, Johnny. If it comes to war between us and Russia, it's going to be machines against men, almost that pure and simple. We're going to be trying to hold an

outpost line—an absolutely vital one—with a string of airbases and radar stations stretching all the way from Barter Island in the Circle to Adak in the west, and back again. I'd hate to tell you, right now, how many men we've got to defend those installations."

"I can guess," McQueen assented grimly.

"Yes. Well, you remember in China when Chennault said he could win the war with his airplanes and old Joe Stilwell asked him what was going to stop the Nips from cuttin' his air bases out from under him? You remember what happened when they did get around to it. Airplanes are fine things—lovely things—but they have to have places to take off and light. Some people are prone to forget that."

"Not the guys who have to fly 'em."

"No. But there's what we're up against. We've got a good many more isolated set-ups than I like to think about that fifty men—ten men—who knew what they were doing could wipe right off the face of the earth. Think of what could be done even to one of our satellite fields. Or a weather station."

"Or . . ." McQueen glanced up at the mountain behind them.

Frayne shuddered. "That's right."

"You're worrying about some kind of a fifth column set-up?"

"That's exactly what I'm worrying about. The Territory is full of Russian blood, Russian place names—" he glanced at Jameson's scraggly gray beard and laughed shortly— "Russian whiskers. If they infiltrate us, they can fade right into the background. In the interior fur districts, around the fish camps and the canneries. . . "

Frayne shook his head, his gaunt, pressure-marked face somber. "Any man we can't identify within a radius of fifty miles of a critical installation is potentially dangerous. And how the hell are you going to identify them? With what I've got to work with?"

"It's a problem, all right," McQueen agreed. "I've thought about it before. Seems, though, as if we ought to be able to stop most of them from getting in, in the first place. They can't walk in, and the number they'd be able to fly over would be limited, I should think. After all, we do patrol. And there's the radar net."

"We're doing what we can. Still, they're coming in. How, I don't know, but they are."

McQueen drained his glass. He sat staring through its empty bottom. "It's a sorry situation, all right," he said, at last. "But what's it got to do with your rustlers on Tugidak? You think they might be some of the infiltrators?"

"They could be. It's a picayune kind of a war, so far, McQueen. I have to watch everything. One thing is the food supply going into any particular district. If it seems like too much, I try to get somebody on the ground to look into who's eating it—why the sudden increase in population. Following the same system, I'd like to know who ate those four hundred and fifty cows. How much meat would that be, all ready to fry?"

"I don't know. I'm no cowpuncher. I know it costs me, at a dollar a pound, about a hundred bucks to bring a quarter of beef over here."

"Call it four hundred pounds an animal then, just for argument. That would be over sixteen thousand pounds of beef. Who got it?"

McQueen thought it over. He glanced at Jameson. Old Charley nodded, soberly. McQueen said, "All right. I'll gas up tonight and Charley and I'll drop down in the morning and look the place over."

Old Jameson grunted. "Do we stop off at Karluk on the way down 'r the way back?"

Frayne looked interested. McQueen said, "The old buck weasel has his snout in my love life again. Aasie Gowen is working in Karluk. She's keeping books for one of the canneries."

"Yes," Frayne said. "I know she is."

Something in his tone caught McQueen's attention. "You know she is? How'd you know? Did you send her down on some nefarious deal of yours?"

"I told you. A fellow at Karluk has bought a hundred thousand dollars' worth of provisions so far this season. The next biggest operator in the camp has shipped in less than twenty. We want to know what's this guy's secret. Also, while she's down there, she's trying to

get a line on the rash of fishermen's strikes that's been breaking out all summer. They've cut the pack at Karluk in half."

"What's so new and startling about that? Alaska Steam's been putting up with that sort of thing for twenty years."

"Nothing new. Just the way it's being done. Generally, you can find some reason for a strike. More pay, less hours—something like that. These are different. One time, they strike because the troller captains are staying out too long. Next time, they say the boats don't stay out long enough so that those who are fishing on shares can make as much money as they think they should. The walk-outs last two or three days and then are called off, whether anything's been decided or not."

McQueen said, "Hm-m. The funny thing to me is, how do they make a strike stick, anyway? Most of those trollers fish their own boats, don't they?"

"They've had trouble, all right. It's a local union, responsible to nobody. They put guard boats across the harbor entrance. There's been some shooting, and a boat or two sunk at the dock."

"Sounds like a hell of a place to send a girl."

Frayne made a weary grimace. "She's the best man I've got left, next to Littledog. Too many people over there might know him."

"That reminds me. How about borrowing Littledog?"

"Why Littledog?"

"Mainly because I haven't yet forgotten the last job you gave me. The time that foul ball assistant of yours, Goodman, had me tied up tighter than Bertha's Sunday pants until Littledog pushed those red whiskers of his through the window. He's my idea of a helpful guy to have around."

Old man Jameson snorted. McQueen said quickly, "Of course, Charley's still pretty useful, considering his age and general decrepitude. Trouble is, if there's shooting, that old .30-30 he's married to will carry about as far as I can heave it."

"I need Littledog," the Army man said simply. "People are getting to know me, too. I don't mind meeting what I have to face to face, but I feel better with somebody around to cover my back."

"You've got the whole Scout platoon, haven't you? I understood they were all rugged characters."

"They are. All forty of them. And from Yukon to Barter to Barrow, from Nome to Adak and back again, they have to cover more territory than even the Texas Rangers would have tried to take on. Of course, if you and Jameson run into anything down there on Tugidak where you'll really need help, I'll try to get it for you. But how about just taking a look, this first trip?"

CHAPTER II

LOADED FOR BEAR

BY mid-morning McQueen had crossed Shelikof Strait and made his landfall on the high, rocky promontory of Cape Ikalik, at the northwest corner of Kodiak Island. The fishing and cannery port of Karluk was only thirty minutes north, to his left. But, putting business before pleasure, he kept the Stinson on its course, skirting Kodiak's western shoreline. He kept land under his left wing tip for about forty-five minutes, until Trap Point, at Akhiok, showed up ahead.

All the way, the spread poles of salmon trollers dotted the water, looking like tiny waterbugs from the air. Curiously, McQueen asked Charley, beside him, "Isn't it kind of late for them to be out? Just exactly when does the fishing season end?"

"'Bout middle of September. This year, the price is so high that they're all likely stayin' out till the last minute. Too, like the colonel said, they been losin' a lot of fishin' time."

Past Trap Point, they left the land again, flying on due south over the deep blue water of Sitkinak Strait until the vast gray mass of Tugidak appeared dead ahead.

McQueen had never seen Tugidak. The chart showed it as a narrow rectangle, the long axis running northeast-southwest. There was a peculiar, atoll-shaped harbor enclosed at the northeast end. On the chart, it made the island

look like a huge, short-handled carrying hook.

They approached at about a thousand feet altitude and skirted the north shore. There were high, tundra cliffs overlooking the atoll at the eastern end. From them, the land sloped down uniformly to the sea at the western tip. It looked level and grassy.

McQueen told Charley, beside him, "Sure looks like cow country. Damned if I ever saw anything like that around here before."

"Find most anything in the Territ'ry, if ye look long enough. I allus heard it was good range. Cattle got fatter'n a Nootka klootch on it."

"I'll take your word for how fat that is. Well, let's look it over."

Throttling back, McQueen let the big float job down to five hundred feet, staying just over the water's edge. The land, all along this northwestern side, was level and grassy. Watching, McQueen saw one speck of brown and white in a coulee, and then another.

"That was a cow, all right," he told Jameson. "You see it?"

Charley chuckled. "Never heard of a spotted moose. Guess those must be part of the fifty Case was able to find."

"Case? That the rancher?"

"Yep. George Case. Lives up at Kodiak."

McQueen said, "Well, I was glad to see that spotted hide. Up until then, I still wasn't too sure about Frayne's yarn."

They were coming to the western end of the island. Almost at the tip, McQueen saw a rickety pier and a shack. There were the scars of recent fires on the beach.

"Case's camp?" he asked Charley.

"That's right. Looks like he just left. Them ashes still black."

"Does he load off that pier? Live cattle?"

"I don't think so. I think he's been doin' his slaughterin' over here and runnin' the meat back to Kodiak to the cold storage plant. But he does bring horses in off that pier."

McQueen shook his head. "I guess Columbus did it. I'd hate to have to help. Well, let's take a gander at the other side of this shebang."

Skirting the western tip, McQueen banked over and flew down the south shore. Clouds of gull and tern swirled off the beaches as they passed over. Beyond that, McQueen saw nothing living.

Fifteen minutes later brought them back to the south of the bay. He said, "That's a queer-looking deal, that harbor, Charley. Must be an old volcano cone, crumbled away on the sea side. Wonder how deep it is."

Jameson was studying it. "Probably good and deep. With a hell of a reef across the mouth."

"What say we go in and take a look? Water looks quiet in there."

The old guide grunted. "I'd sooner take my looks from one o' them bluffs on the land side. Why don't we h'ist up and try that little lake topside?"

"All right. I guess that's where a pair of innocent bear hunters would head for, come to think of it."

He swung the Stinson back out to sea, reaching for altitude. A second thought struck him. He asked Charley, "Did you see something in there that you didn't like?"

The range and accuracy of old man Jameson's faded blue eyes had startled McQueen before. Now, he said, "Sort of, Johnny. I dunno why there should be so danged many ravens hangin' around that beach, down yonder."

"Ravens, eh? Why not?"

"Like most animals—includin' two-legged—they gang up where there's feed. What're they feedin' on, back in that bay?"

"Maybe a whale got hung up on the bar. I've seen that."

Charley gave a disgusted snort. McQueen said, "Well, we better go back and take a look."

"Let's set down, first. Like I said, we can do our investigatin' of the shoreline from the bluffs up yonder, just as well. I've had about all the wing-flappin' I can use for one day."

There was, plainly, some reason that Jameson didn't want to fly back over that bay again. As McQueen knew from long experience, when the old sourdough chose to be mysterious about something, there was no use trying to pry it out of him before his own good time.

McQUEEN got two thousand feet and headed back. The small lake Charley had mentioned was in a fold in the hills close to their highest point, not far from the cliffs overhanging the landlocked bay. The approaches were good and McQueen dragged it once, scanning for snags. The water looked deep and clear.

Putting the Stinson down, he taxied in to a shelving, rocky beach. Cutting the switches, they hauled the ship up at a place smooth enough to be safe and tapped steel pitons into crevices in the weathered rock for their mooring lines.

The ship secured, McQueen looked around him. The little lake was at the bottom of a saucer, tilted to the west. That way, the rim was low and grassy, spilling down the long slope toward the island's western end. The distance to the eastern rim was less, and the grade was steeper. McQueen estimated that the drop off to the bay was no more than a mile or two in that direction.

The whole rim was weathered rock, the backbone of Tugidak's old volcanic skeleton. Here and there, erosion had exposed a hump or a seamed face. Clumps of birch and black spruce ringed the lake, growing out of the seams and crannies.

A hundred yards along the beach, to the west, one of the clefts opened out wide, leading up to a shallow spot in the rim. Jameson moved down that way, studying the lake margin as he went along. McQueen saw the old man stop as he came to the broad, beaten trail coming down from the gap and drop to one knee. McQueen went over. Along the beach, wherever the ground was soft, it was marked with old cattle sign. Cow chips, dry and half dried, littered the shore.

He came up to Jameson, still on his knee, and asked, "Find a cow track, Charley? I was just going to ask you if it was ravens that messed up the beach so."

The old man grunted. McQueen looked over his shoulder. Jameson's attention was on a sizable shoe-pac print, clear and distinct in the wind-dried mud. McQueen, waiting for Charley to speak, made no more facetious remarks. But when the old man's concentration had stretched to minutes and it didn't seem that he was going to offer anything, McQueen said, "Footprint, I deduce. A shoe-pac. Probably had a foot in it."

Jameson rose creakily and brushed off his knee. "I reckon we better unload and set up camp. We might be here a while, Johnny."

It was McQueen's turn to grunt. "Look, Seeing-Eye! I know you. Don't give me that pilgrim treatment. So these beefsteaks used the lake for a waterhole? So those cheechako cowpunchers Frayne told us about came up here looking for 'em and left a footprint. So what?"

"So we better stick around and see where the other end of these tracks come out."

McQueen stared. "They'll just go down to the west end, where we saw the shack and the pier. That's where you said they did their slaughtering."

"I don't think so, Johnny. Case and his fellers never would have come clear up here on foot. I told you they allus brought a couple of cayuses over."

McQueen nodded. "Even I saw the horse tracks along the beach, too. Does that prove one of 'em couldn't have dismounted for a minute?"

"No. I don't figger to have proved anything, jest yet. But, ye see, Johnny, this pac print wasn't made by anybody *lookin'* for cattle. It was made by some fella who was *drivin'* cattle."

"How do you know?"

"Because it's overlaid right on a cow track made at the same time. At least, not no old one."

McQueen considered that. "Maybe they picked up a few head up here. Frayne said they did find fifty."

"O' course, that's what *might* have happened. That's why I jest said that we'll see where they do go."

"Well, all right," McQueen gave in reluctantly. "If you say so. But can I remind you that Frayne only sent us over here to find out for sure whether it was bear that got 'em?"

Charley was on his way back to the plane. Over his shoulder, he said irritably, "I told ye there was no bear over here, dum it! Ye find a bear on Tugidak, I'll wrastle him raw."

"It's a promise," McQueen assured him. "I'll be looking."

He unloaded their sleeping bags while Charley set up the Coleman stove and boiled water for tea. There was a spruce clump not far from the plane thick enough to break the wind and he spread the tarp in its lee. By the time Jameson was ready with his scalding brew and a handout of the iron rations they had brought, camp was pitched.

The rations were Army K. Before they left the plane again, McQueen noticed Charley distributing another about his pockets. McQueen, muttering about it, did likewise.

Jameson led the way back to the ravine running up to the gap in the rim. The floor was worn bare and hard-packed. It had obviously been used frequently by a good many animals and pretty recently.

Old Charley's weightless, deceptively shambling gait was a man-killer in any kind of country. McQueen's summer of roof-shingling and pilgrim-guiding had put him in good shape. They reached the notch in the rim in a few minutes. Jameson paused.

Ahead of them, the land was fairly flat for at least a mile. Beyond that, McQueen recalled that it dropped off quickly to the north shore. All of it tilted, as on the other side of the rim, down to the west. However, to the east and northeast, a wide grassy valley stretched up to end at a cluster of pinnacles against the sky. The tracks turned that way, the trail broadening out and finally disappearing altogether.

IN LESS than half a mile, McQueen began to feel the pace. The stuff through which they were going was no longer grass. Rather, it seemed to be a tangle of grasses and weeds laced together by a myriad of tough little vines. About halfway to his knees in height, the stuff dragged at his insteps as he tried to force his way through. When he began to lift his feet over it, he felt the effect in his thigh and calf muscles very soon. Besides, he no longer saw any tracks.

He stopped. "Orient me, Killdeer," he said, puffing a little. "Where'd our trail get to? And what the hell is this miniature jungle underfoot?"

Charley grinned. "Fust tundra ye ever see, Johnny? This is about the beginning of it—the real Aleutian kind. West o' here, down the Chain, it gits really tough. Trail's still here, underneath. Look."

Charley bent to part the tangle. McQueen waved him on, resignedly. "O.K., I'll take your word for it. But why in hell would they be going up this way? What I mean is, why shouldn't they be going up here? They probably grazed all over the place."

Jameson squatted on his heels and pulled a twig off a six-inch juniper bush. He chewed on it, reflectively. "I got a theory about this, Johnny," he ruminated. McQueen suspected that he had had the theory for quite some time. He was only explaining it in order to give McQueen a chance to get his breath back.

"Think it over. If these cows was stole, they went away from here on a boat. They wasn't pushed to the lower end of the island, or Case would have seen the traces. You can't either load or kill four hundred cows without makin' a hell of a mess. Too much of one to hide. Consequently, I figger they was gathered up right here around the lake—this time o' year, they'd most of 'em be up here on the high ground, anyway, jest like moose—and pushed the other way. Up this valley."

McQueen looked up toward the pinnacles. "We're almost to the edge of the cliff above the bay," he objected. "You mean you think there's some kind of a path down to the water on that side?"

Jameson rose. "Come on. I'll show you what I think happened."

He led the way up the valley again. After a while, the sides began to steepen and converge. As the floor became narrower, McQueen saw cattle tracks again. It was plain that a considerable movement had taken place here recently. Even the tough tundra grasses hadn't yet sprung back.

At the top, the valley became a steep-walled canyon, turning around the broad base of one huge pinnacle. Here the grass was beaten completely flat, ripped and torn by a thousand sharp hooves.

Wondering, McQueen followed Jameson's wiry back around the pinnacle.

The canyon ended abruptly, right here, in a three-sided box. One side was the rock mass of the pinnacle at their backs, and two were the straight sidewalls, rising fifty feet above their heads. The box was no more than twenty paces square. On the fourth side there was—nothing at all!

McQueen gave a startled grunt and moved cautiously forward, peering over. Below him, the cliff fell a sheer two hundred feet down to the placid surface of the landlocked bay. Directly beneath, a shale beach extended out into the water, making a point perhaps a hundred yards long and half as wide. The shale was oddly discolored. A shifting black mass of ravens circled and squawked over it.

The cliff edge at his feet was scarred and ragged with newly dislodged rock and grass clumps hanging by half-torn roots. McQueen moved back, away from it.

"What the hell is this?"

"Quickest way I know of to knock off four hundred head of beef," Jameson told him, grimly.

"You mean they just drove 'em over the cliff?"

"What do you think? Look at the ground. It's an old Indian trick, so I've heard. Used to run buffaler off places like this all the time. What chance would they have?"

McQueen pictured the stream of cattle coming around the shoulder of that pinnacle, constantly shoved from behind. He nodded, slowly. "I guess they wouldn't have much. But, migod, what a mess down below!"

Charley dropped to his hands and knees and crawled forward. Looking down, he agreed. "The fellers that did it had to have strong stomachs, all right. Prob'ly they didn't run 'em over all at once. One bunch stayed up here to push the pore critters over about fifty at a crack, while the rest worked down below."

"You sound like you think it was half an army."

"It was more than a few. Figger how long it takes a man to dress out a moose. Unless, o' course, they been at it all summer. I don't figger they had that much time. They might've."

McQueen crawled up beside him and looked down at the beach again. "They don't seem to have left as much trace of a job like that, down there, as I'd expect. Unless the ravens have cleaned it up."

"Them ravens are jest pickin' at the blood and crumbs between rocks. Some stuff's mebbe washin' in from the bay. The hides likely went with the meat. They must've hauled the heads an' guts out and dumped 'em in the water. Heads'll sink. Fish would get nearly all the rest. Must be jest a little that's washed ashore."

McQueen swore again, wonderingly, then he said, "Well, I guess we've answered Frayne's question. I'll have to admit that brown bear didn't do this."

Charley snorted. "You really think that'll satisfy the colonel?"

"No, but he's got better ways of finding out where that beef went than we have. Nobody floated it out of here on a raft. Some boat took it somewhere. There's supposed to be checks on boat movements."

"Mebbe so. Me, though, I'm like the feller that said nobody had ever taken the trouble to teach him anything, so all he knew he'd learned by goin' and lookin'. I figger I'd like to look at that beach, down below."

McQueen admitted to a certain curiosity about that, himself. "We can take the ship and land down there beside the point."

Charley shook his head. "I think we can get down from here. That point looks like it was made by the wash from some stream. It must've found some kind of crack to come down in."

THEY retraced their path to the valley and tried the left-hand side first, because the climbing looked better. Just over the rim, they found the fault, a steep, rocky declivity angling down under a huge overhang. Except for one place where they had to scramble down a twenty-foot chimney, the going was fairly easy.

There were tracks on the cleft's sandy floor. Some of them were of the same out-

sized pac which they had seen in the mud around the lake.

Close to water level, the cleft split at another vertical, rocky spear. The main branch continued on to the right, widening out at the base of the point. On the left, the corridor between the cliff wall and the spear was narrower and rock-strewn. It was easily passable, however, and one set of the big prints led up that way. McQueen and Jameson followed.

Past the rock spear, the cleft did an abrupt right-angled turn to the left, straight into the cliff wall. The two explorers found themselves in a cavern, high-ceilinged, sand-floored and dry. Narrow at the mouth, it widened rapidly until, twenty feet from the entrance, it was fully as wide as the full dimension of the clubhouse back on Iliuk. The end wall was out of sight in the shadows.

McQueen whistled softly. "And what do you think of this! Been used, too."

The ashes of a dead fire, used many times, were underfoot. In fact, a dozen odd lengths of driftwood were still stacked against one wall. The sand was tracked and scuffed by numerous feet. Jameson's head swung slowly back and forth, his nose testing the stale air.

"Lot of people been in here, Johnny."

"There sure as hell have. You know something? I wouldn't be a damn bit surprised but what we've found one of the stations on that reverse underground Frayne was talking about."

Old Charley wagged his head. "That kind of thing is a leetle out of my line. You figger somebody picks 'em up here and sort of distributes 'em, is that it? How?"

"Damned if I know. Maybe your pal Case. Maybe one or more of those trollers. They're all over the place, from spring to fall."

"That could be. But who brings the wolverines this fur? How do they get here in the fust place?"

"That's the jackpot question, all right. Damned if I know. Maybe the comrades have got some more of those lend-lease PBY's with Navy markings. Though how they'd get by the Chain radar net is beyond me. I'll tell you one thing, though.

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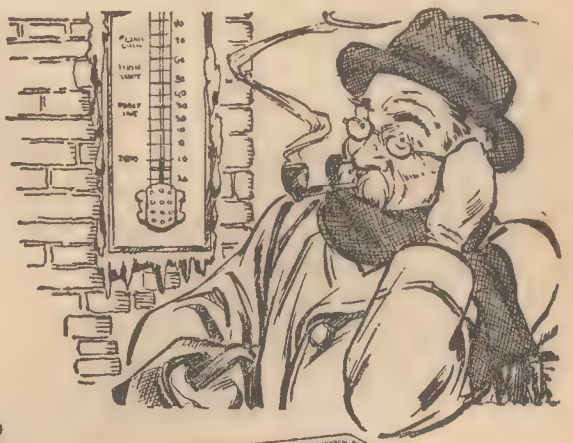

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"Enough for a week, if'n we keep our belts tight."

"We'll keep 'em tight. Tell you what. We'll drag our sacks up to that jumping-off place up yonder and set up an O.P. Of course, they may be all through with this. Chances are, though, they're not. We'll see."

Before they climbed back, they took a look at the beach. Jameson's guess was right on the nose. The whole point had been bathed in blood. The rocks were covered with black encrustation and the ravens rose in protesting clouds from scraps of decaying offal all along the water's edge. The stench was all but overpowering.

They made the return trip to the plane just before sundown. Making pack-loads of their sleeping bags, all the food, and the Coleman with a minimum of fuel, they made slower time on the way back. McQueen, especially, was beginning to feel knots in his legs. It was a dark, moonless ten o'clock before they were again in the little box canyon overlooking the bay.

McQueen shouldered out of his pack, letting it down with a grunt of relief. He started to say something heartfelt on the subject when a sharp "Hsst!" from Jameson stopped him. The old man's white-whiskered jaw, faintly luminous in the murk, was rigid, pointing down at the vast pool of darkness below them.

McQueen saw it, too. The riding lights of a boat, pricking the inky black. One white circle lower down was probably a galley porthole. He whispered to Charley, straining his eyes downward.

"What is she? Can you tell?"

"Not for sure. I think she's a troller, at anchor."

McQueen saw after a time that the lights were not moving. He said, "She may be just a fisherman, run in for the night. If she is, we'll know in the morning. We'll watch her. Roll out your sack. I'll take the first shift."

It was twelve-fifteen by the glowing dial of his watch when he nudged Charley awake and zipped up his own bag. The vessel hadn't moved; her riding lights were still winking through the darkness. The porthole light had winked off long before.

It was not yet one when Charley nudged him back. And a faint glow reflected from the moon in its last quarter and, in late August, in apogee, spread over the water below. It was enough to distinguish the color of the vessel—white—but not her outlines.

Automatically, McQueen had rolled to an elbow and looked down when Charley had awakened him. But he was not quite alert and Jameson had to tell him. "Lookit that light, Johnny. Seems like she's signaling, mebbe."

The riding lights were winking at her masthead and counter. As he watched, the masthead light went off; came on again. It was repeated once, then went out and stayed out.

"Did you count it or time it or anything?"

Jameson said, "No, Johnny. I didn't catch it soon enough. The first time it went out, I thought maybe she was swingin' on her hook an' the mast jest masked it. I'm sorry."

"It's all right. Looks like it might have just gone off by itself. See, the other one's off, too. Just watch and see if anything happens."

THEY did not have long to wait. McQueen, staring at the harbor entrance to see if the procedure had been a signal to an entering vessel, missed the first white curl of the surface that announced it. It was Jameson's strangled gasp that jerked him back.

Then, for seconds, he could only stare at the great, black leviathan which broke the shimmering water close beside the anchored vessel. As she rose, conning tower and flat railed deck with its shrouded gun and instrument mounts awash, he found his voice.

"A sub! A damn, lousy Russian sub, less than two hundred miles from Kodiak!"

His tone was bitterly loud in the lonesome dark of their tiny cranny in the cliff top. Nobody but Jameson was apt to hear him, two hundred feet down and across a mile of open water, but at the moment McQueen wouldn't have cared

if they had. The sight of that huge monster down there filled him with rage. McQueen had always considered that there was something unnecessarily furtive about the whole idea of submarines.

Jameson muttered, "I read somethin' in the papers about one o' them things being' spotted in the Gulf of Alaska down off Seward 'bout a month ago. I didn't believe it. What the hell's the Navy doin'?"

McQueen had cooled down a little. He watched the scene below with absorbed interest, cursing himself for not having thought of bringing a pair of night glasses along. But why should he have thought of it?

He said, "Can't blame the Navy too much. I've read about those things, too. Seems the Krauts invented something called a Snorkel, just before the end of the war, that lets one of them run indefinitely under the surface. Now the comrades have got it, of course."

"What you suppose they're up to in here? Can you see anything down there?"

"I can tell you one thing without looking. This is how those characters Frayne was talking about are getting into the Territory, sure as hell. Also, I expect that's where George Case's beef went. Right back to Siberia in the belly of that thing."

"Raw, Johnny? They'd never get it there. Anyway, ain't that kind of expensive transportation f'r a few tons o' meat?"

"Maybe," McQueen admitted. "But those babies will carry off anything that's lying around loose, unless they've changed a whole lot since I saw 'em last. Don't tell me they aren't loading something out there, right now."

The dim outline of the white vessel had merged alongside the big sub's low deck. A good deal of activity was visible on both. McQueen and Jameson, straining their eyes through the gloom, could distinguish the movement but not its purpose.

By the time the submarine moved out toward the harbor mouth again, submerging as she went, both of them were practically blind from squinting. The white vessel followed the sub on out into the oncoming dawn.

McQueen and old Charley rolled their sacks and bolted down the grade to the lake and their plane. McQueen started his engines while Charley was loading. He swung his nose around into a take-off while the old man still had one foot on the float. He gunned her off the water when the big engines were barely warm.

Over the harbor entrance, they found the Pacific empty as far as they could see. McQueen said, "We got two choices, Charley. That troller we can overhaul in ten minutes, if we can catch her still at sea. The thing is, did she go north towards Karluk, or east to Kodiak? If we guess wrong, she can make some cove and hide out till hell freezes."

"What you figger to do if ye ketch her, Johnny?"

"Do?" McQueen snapped. "Trail her and call the Coast Guard on the CW set."

"Then the Coast Guard comes a-chuggin' up like the U. S. Cavalry and takes her in tow for questions an' answers. An' then what happens to the sub, back there?"

McQueen frowned. "I see what you mean. I guess this is for Frayne, after all. O. K., we'll take it back to him. But we've got to try and at least identify that troller, on the way. So—north or east?"

"I'd say north. Course, there's canneries all along, both ways. That fisherman might be out from anywhere. But seems like the south shore, over to the east toward Kodiak would be kinda *too* close under the Navy's nose."

"I think you're right. North it is then. And keep your eye peeled."

WHEN the first of the salmon trollers showed up below, five minutes later, there was not one, but six, and three of them were painted white, or had once been. McQueen growled.

From there on, the waterbugs dotted the channel all the way to Trap Point. They saw at least fifty. McQueen's mutterings became lurid. Ten miles short of the Point, they passed over a larger vessel, making knots on their same course. She was slim and white, but three times the size of the trollers.

"Wonder what that is," McQueen

asked idly. "Looks almost like a cutter."

"I think I know her. Looks like Bjornstad's *Nina*."

"Who's Bjornstad?"

"B-yesus B-yornstad, they call 'im. He's a fish buyer, trader, anything he can make a buck at. Even fishes some, when buyin's risky. Sails out of Karluk."

"Looks like quite a boat he's got."

"I guess she is. I heard he had a new one. Bought her at one o' the Army sales, down to Seattle after the war."

"He an old-timer?"

"Been around quite awhile. I can't rightly remember when I first heard about him. He's a huge, big Scandihoovian, right skookum with his fists."

McQueen had his mind on other things. He said in disgust, "Well, we've got no way of telling which of these damned trollers is the one we want. Best thing for us to do is get the hell back to Iliuk, get Frayne on the radio and give him the score. Maybe he'll have some way to check 'em all before they get a chance to unload whatever or whoever one of 'em picked up last night . . ."

Frayne was at the club when they landed. "I had to go on down to Port Heiden yesterday," he explained. "On the way back, I decided to stop off here and see if you had found anything. Mainly an excuse to get in a little fishing on the side."

McQueen told him what they had found. The Security chief pulled at his lip and said, "Oh, oh!" softly, when McQueen came to the sub. The story ended, he sat silent for a space, his long face grim and thoughtful.

At length he said, "I believe you're right. That's what's been happening, all right. That sub's been doing double duty. Patroling the Gulf to watch sea traffic and shuttling their people in and out. Right under our damn noses, too. I'm afraid we've lost this load, though. The Navy have their ways of checking and I'll get word to them right away. But I'm sure it's too late. By this time that troller will have run in somewhere and dumped whoever or whatever it was she picked up."

"Jameson thinks she may have been out of Karluk."

"Probably. That might be where all the extra supplies Aasie's down there investigating have gone. That confounded sub crew has undoubtedly been living off the country. It's a Russian habit. Anyhow, you better go down there and look around."

"Karluk?"

Frayne nodded. "Charley said yesterday you'd been thinking of going. You can kill both ptarmigan with one stick."

"My visit was to be purely social," McQueen pointed out.

"You can still see Aasie. That is, if she'll speak to you. My idea is that you let your whiskers grow, wear your holiest pants, and go get a job. Find out what Aasie knows and, between the two of you, we may be able to dope out when the next trip of the sub will be."

McQueen reconsidered. "Seriously," he said, "I don't think there's much use of trying to set a trap on Tugidak. Those trollers are all over the place. They'd be sure to spot any unusual activity. Since we don't know which of them is which, you couldn't prevent that. Can't very well tie 'em all up."

"We won't have to. The Navy can set the trap all right. They'll just run in there first dark night, and mine the entrance. That'll take care of the submarine."

"We told you that the troller signaled her in. At least, we're pretty sure she did. What about that?"

"I'm no expert on undersea mines," Frayne admitted. "But I think they are moored at a certain depth. The Navy will undoubtedly fix them so that the troller—or any innocent fisherman who happens to run in there for the night—can pass over safely. The sub's the Navy's worry, anyway. What I want to know is who and where is the tie-up ashore. In other words, who was on that troller and where are they now? Who, if anybody, do they report to? You get the hell down to Karluk and find out."

McQueen said, "Yes, sir. How do I get there?"

"Day after tomorrow, the *Northern Cross* will put in at Seldovia, picking up cargo from the canneries for Seward. You be there to go aboard and hit the skipper for a job as deckhand. He'll be

expecting you." Frayne grinned. "He'll probably get all the work he can out of you, too. But he won't be too surprised when you jump ship at Karluk. What's the name you went under up at Fairbanks that time you did the job on Morse Mixon? Mason? That'll do for this time, too."

CHAPTER III

TROUBLE, KING-SIZE

ON A streaming, gusty afternoon ten days later, the *Northern Cross* poked her bluff bows around Uyak and lined them up on the buoy marking the harbor channel at the mouth of the Karluk. The cannery town was scattered along the left bank. Out in Shelikof Strait, a westerly approaching gale velocity was blowing straight in, backing up the eighteen-foot, out-going tide. McQueen's considerable experience in the Territory had all been either landbound or airborne. He was learning for the first time what "Very Heavy Tide Rips" on a chart meant.

Evidently even the hardiest of the trollers had wanted no part of those tremendous seas because the channel inside the point was a forest of masts and raised trolling poles. They berthed the *Cross* at a ramshackle pier below a cannery shed with *HODGMAN PACKING CO.* painted on its side. Axel Swenson, the *Cross's* master, came out of the pilothouse to supervise.

He saw McQueen—Mason—at the rail with his slender duffel bag all ready to go and grinned. "Yu yust gettin' to make good hand, Mason. Yu come back any time."

McQueen looked down at the palms of his hands where the blisters were just beginning to harden. For the benefit of any stray ears which might be hung out on the dock, he snarled back, "You slave-drivin' Svenska trap-robber! If I never see your damn scow again, it'll be ten years too soon."

He winked at Axel, shouldered his duffel bag and stepped over the rail to the wharf. Of traditional old-time Alaska, fish camps were about all that was left. Even the interior towns were going modern and civilized, with plate glass fronts and nylon stockings. There was nothing post-war about Karluk.

From the stinking cannery wharves, up the muddy, twisting road which mounted the hill, to the planked walk which paralleled the single line of store fronts ranging along the bluff above, a picture taken in the days of Soapy Smith would have looked no different. Nor would the rough-hewn throng on the sidewalk have looked out of place in it.

McQueen shoved his way through the clustered knots of men, most of them as big and unkempt as himself after a week on the *Northern Cross,* and the almost as numerous jacketed, pants-clad girls, from Aleut to drugstore blonde. The line of store fronts and bars—the bars having about a three to one edge—ran along for the equivalent of three city blocks. One of them reared a comparatively lofty second story with the paint peeling off a yellow *KARLUK HOTEL* sign over the door.

As per custom, McQueen dropped his duffel bag in a corner of the lobby, without bothering the desk. The bag would be as safe there as in the common bunkroom, where he would be sleeping if he were lucky enough to find a bed at all. He ate a supper of dollar-sized fried potatoes and oleo-encrusted hamburger steak, washed down with a bitter black fluid served in a coffee cup, paid two dollars for it, and went out on the sidewalk again.

The widest, noisiest doorway in the three-block row was according to its sign, *KING BAR.* McQueen headed for it. Inside, the pattern was familiar. The architect who designed Alaskan saloons traveled widely.

The bar ran the length of the right-hand wall. A row of booths lined the opposite side. At the far end, a big, rainbow-hued juke-box tuned to maximum volume did its ear-splitting best to blanket the uproar along the bar.

McQueen bought a drink and carried it to an empty booth. He took the seat facing the door and settled himself to watch for whatever might develop. He knew, from long experience, that everybody in camp would pass through that

door at least once during the evening. But he was on his third whiskey before anybody he knew came in.

She was with a man shorter than her own straight-shouldered height. McQueen gave her slacks and plaid jacket an approving glance before turning his attention to the man. Aasie had always been one blonde who wore slacks with skill and authority. She had precisely the appropriate architecture for them.

The man behind her was much less worth looking at. The face between shaven blue jowls and thinning black hair was fish-belly pale and his thickening middle looked soft. He wore a necktie and the pants shoved into his pacs matched his coat. Evidently a local business man.

They took a booth three spaces away. Couples were dancing to the juke-box in the space between the line of booths and the bar, scuffing the dried mud on the floor into clouds eddying around their ankles. McQueen finished his drink and rose, moving down the line.

Aasie saw him first. If McQueen had not been looking for it, even he would never have caught the tiny flash of expression that narrowed her eyes for an instant.

The man with her looked up and scowled. McQueen pretended to weave a little and spoke to Aasie. "Like to dance?"

The man said, "No, she wouldn't."

"I asked the lady," McQueen pointed out, politely.

"An' I told you. Now blow!"

McQueen turned back to Aasie. "Polite, ain't he? Well, how about it, honey?"

Aasie hesitated. Her escort came to her rescue with flags flying. Squirming out of his seat, he jumped up, pushing McQueen in the chest with one pudgy hand. McQueen looked down at the hand.

"Take that thing away and wash it before you pat me with it."

The other was frantic with sudden rage. "You drunken, fish wharf bum!" he yelled. "Get out of here before I—"

Aasie came between them. "Don't get so excited, Ken," she told the fat one. "The man just asked me to dance. If you're going to make such a fuss about it, I think I will."

Ken whirled on her. "No, you won't! No woman that goes out with me dances with every stinkin' hood that comes along."

McQueen put a hand on his shoulder and turned the man back gently. "The lady said she wanted to dance. So sit down and behave while she does it."

The other wouldn't be reasoned with. He pulled back his right and let fly, telegraphing his intentions with no attempt at finesse. Regretfully, McQueen tapped him on the chest with a left, to straighten him, and hit him in the belly with a right, not very hard. It barely backed him up against the booth partition where he lost his balance and sat with a thud, holding his belt with both hands and gasping. But all the fight had gone out of him.

Someone tapped McQueen on the shoulder. He looked around at a burly individual in an apron, a billy in one capable fist. The barkeep said, "We don't like trouble, friend."

"Neither do I," McQueen assured him. "This wasn't my idea."

THE bartender looked at Aasie, standing alongside McQueen, as cool and unruffled as Mrs. Astor at a garden party. "How about it, lady? What started it?"

"It's all perfectly silly," Aasie told him. "This gentleman asked me to dance. Mr. Ruskin objected. That's all."

"Did you object?"

"No, I wanted to dance."

The barkeep looked down at the man on the floor. "An' what's wrong with that, chief? The ge'man asks polite, what more d'yuh want? This's Alaska, pal. You watch yaself!"

To McQueen, he said, "Sorry I hadda butt in, fella," and waddled back to the bar.

Ruskin picked himself up. Aasie watched him, doubtfully. McQueen held out his arms. She stepped into them and they moved out onto the gritty floor. McQueen said, "My name's Mason, chick. What's yours?"

Her bright head was not much below his ear. He heard something which sounded suspiciously like, "You bastard!" but of course he knew he must be mistaken. No lady would say a thing like that.

She did say, "You shouldn't have hit him, Mr. Mason."

"Jack."

"Jack. You still shouldn't have hit him. That was my boss."

McQueen looked over her shoulder. Ruskin was making his way to the door. "You couldn't have liked working for that pilgrim. Too quick-tempered."

"I've been looking for a chance to quit," she conceded. "Otherwise, I'd never have let you pull that stunt. Well, if you've chased my boy friend—as usual, you heel!—you can take me back and buy me a drink."

A booth in the King was the safest place in Karluk to talk. They had to lean close and practically shout to even hear each other over the cacophony of the juke box. McQueen liked the system.

She said, "I've been wondering when you'd show up in Karluk, Johnny."

"Why? What made you think I was coming?"

She looked surprised. "I heard the message the colonel sent you over KODK, night before last. I'm 'Maggie,' or had you forgotten?"

Alaskan commercial broadcasting stations had always made a practice of broadcasting personal messages for an hour or two each day. It was a quick and handy means of communication to isolated trapper's or prospectors' cabins and fishing boats. In many cases, the only one they had. Army Security had long made use of it as a method of contacting its agents under circumstances wherein no other method was possible. Using their own code, transmission of information or instructions could be made direct and simple.

McQueen said, "I didn't get that one. That piece of junk Axel Swenson uses for a receiver on the *Cross* was out of order all the way down from Seldovia. What did Frayne have to say?"

Aasie wrinkled her forehead, remembering. "It was to 'George Morell'—that's still you, isn't it?—and the message was: 'Supplies on beach for you at new location. Let us know how they work. Love to Maggie.' Frayne signed it himself: 'Woods Tool and Hardware Company!' "

So the Navy had come through. After all, there was no reason why they shouldn't have. They had had ten days to do it in. It was less than an overnight run from Kodiak to Tugidak and Frayne had enough authority to be persuasive. McQueen hoped that he had also succeeded in talking them out of leaving any observers or other trace of their operation which might scare the quarry away from the next rendezvous in Tugidak bay.

He said, "Well, thanks, Aasie. It was just routine but I'm glad to get it, anyway."

"What are you up to, or should I ask?"

"It's nothing much. Believe it or not, I'm just looking for some cows Frayne's lost."

He explained, a little. He didn't mention the submarine.

She said, "It sounds as if you're on as

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big a feather hunt as I am. I've been ready to leave for weeks. That's why I was glad, on second thought, that Ruskin started that fracas. If he fires me, I can go back to Anchorage."

"Frayne's dope about the hundred thousand bucks' worth of supplies turned out to be just a rumor, did it?"

"Oh, no. Ruskin got them. But there was nothing off-key about it. Ruskin simply resold most of them to Bernt Bjornstad. He's a man who trades up and down the Chain."

McQueen felt as if he had been hit between the eyes with a mallet. He sat silently cursing himself and Charley Jameson for the morons they undoubtedly were. Being so blindly convinced that the vessel they had seen in the bay on Tugidak was a troller, they had overlooked the obvious.

"Owns a boat called the *Nina?*"

"Yes, that's her name. Do you know him?" Aasie laughed. "He's a pet. That's him down at the far end of the bar. The blond with the beard."

She looked down the bar and, catching someone's eye, waved to him. McQueen, watching, gasped at the sight of the grinning giant who waved back. He said, "A pet, is he? A pet for Gargantua. How big is that guy, anyway?"

She laughed again. "He isn't little. But oh, so gentle."

McQueen looked again and grunted. He had an idea how gentle. The bearded Viking down the room was at least six-four or five, and if he weighed less than two-fifty, McQueen was a poor guesser. He had shoulders like the transom of a dory.

The atmosphere in the King Bar had grown remarkably thick. At least, something was making McQueen uncomfortable. He said, "Well, since your date blew and it looks as if I'd made a pick-up, how about walking you home?"

"I've got a room in the hotel. It's all of a block but come ahead."

Outside, McQueen was preoccupied. He asked, "This Ruskin—you said you worked for him. What kind of a place has he got?"

"He's a wholesaler. Sells to the canneries and the other fish camps as well as the traders."

"Do any packing?"

"No. He buys, though. As well as some raw fish to freeze."

"Oh? He's got a freezing room too, has he? Whereabouts?"

"Where did you tie up this afternoon?"

"Beside Hodgman's."

"Ruskin's past that. The last wharf in the line. He calls it the Northern Cold Storage. His shed is down on the wharf. The cold storage plant and the office is on the hill right above it. Bjornstad generally ties the *Nina* there, when he's in port. You can't miss her, she's almost an eighty-footer, painted white. She's pretty."

"Yes," McQueen agreed, "I'll bet she is."

They turned into the hotel lobby and mounted the stairs. Aasie's room was at the end of the hall. Inside her door, McQueen said, "I wouldn't have come up here except I've got one more thing to tell you."

She stood facing him, and lifted her arms. "You'd have come up if I'd had to hit you over the head. How long has it been since you last took the trouble to come to Anchorage, McQueen?"

"I've been busy building the club, you know."

"Yes, I'm sure you have. Well, you aren't working on any clubs now—besides the one I'm going to sock you with if I have to ask you one more time to kiss me."

McQueen lifted his head, some time later. He muttered, "Pleasure before business, I always say. But there's your local reputation to consider. Now, I'll have to go back to the King and get drunk, so's to make sure everybody sees me there."

"I suppose you'd better. What is it you said you wanted me to do?"

"Don't quit Ruskin if you can help it. Tell him I'm your cousin from Norway, or something. Stick around long enough to get hold of—or make copies of—all the receipts, if any, that Ruskin got from Bjornstad for those supplies."

"Why, Johnny?" she asked, curiously. "You don't think Bjornstad is a comrade, do you?"

"These days, these parts, I don't trust

anybody. Don't you either. Especially Bjornstad. And get those receipts."

CHAPTER IV

COLD STORAGE

BJORNSTAD still occupied two normal men's places at the end of the King Bar. McQueen saw the huge head and the beard as he shouldered in and got his own drink. He had had time to barely taste it when he felt a slap on his shoulder, none too gentle. Twisting around, he saw an unpleasant expression with Ruskin standing behind it.

Ruskin said, "I've been wondering if you'd have the guts to come back. How about stepping outside?"

McQueen groaned. The man looked as if he was going to insist on being a nuisance. But there didn't seem to be anything to be done about it. McQueen poured down the rest of his drink and said, "All right, Sheriff. I'll come quiet."

In the street, Ruskin turned right down the boardwalk, heading toward the waterfront. As they left the door of the King, McQueen thought that some others behaved as if they were following. He stopped and looked around. Three

As he jumped, the fat man bowled into him, driving his shoulder into McQueen's back.

rough-looking characters at his heels stopped, too.

McQueen told Ruskin, "This is far enough for me."

Ruskin sneered. "O. K., take it here, then."

He nodded to the three goons. They spread, one staying on the walk and the other two going into the street, circling towards McQueen's rear. The one in front, on the walk, was the biggest and ugliest. He shuffled forward, grinning.

McQueen, wearing soft rubber pacs, had only his hands to use. He snapped the big one's head back with a jab and hit him under one hairy ear with a solid right, dropping him to his knees. As he threw the punch, McQueen tried to leap clear and to his right. His immediate objective was to cross the walk and get his back against a building.

In his tactical planning, he had forgotten Ruskin behind him. As he jumped, the fat man bowled into him, driving his shoulder into the small of McQueen's back. As he did so, the two in the street both dived at McQueen's legs. One of them connected just above the knees. The combination was too much, and McQueen went off the walk landing flat on his back in the mud. The whole pack swarmed over him and the situation suddenly looked very, very bad.

It changed just as suddenly. A bull voice roared above them and the weight on McQueen's chest shifted at the same moment. One of the thugs went rolling and another found himself dangling in mid-air, a maul-like fist under his nose. The fist pistoned once, making a sound like a tamper in wet cement. The man's nose spurted a torrent and his jaw fell open, slackly.

The reinforcement tossed the limp carcass aside, giving McQueen his first glimpse of his rescuer. The size and the beard were unmistakable. Bjornstad was rumbling at Ruskin.

"What t'e hell's t'e idea, Ruskin? Can't you vight your own vights?"

Ruskin mumbled something. The giant roared again. "I saw t'e whole t'ing. You was wrong from t'e beginning. But you vant to vight about it, go to it. But vun at a time, b-yesus!"

Ruskin had no stomach for that. Plainly, too, he was more afraid of Bjornstad than of McQueen. McQueen didn't blame him.

The giant reached down a walking beam arm and boosted McQueen to his feet. McQueen said, "Thanks," rubbing at the viscous mud plastered to his back.

"You'll have to strip and scrub 'em," Bjornstad advised. "T'at mud is vun half fish guts and vun half manure. You got a place?"

"No. I left my ditty in the hotel lobby."

"Best ve get it and take you to my boat. T'ere, ve can fix you up."

It was as simple as that. Bjornstad explained, "T'at Ruskin has had fellers beat up before. I do business vit him and I know him. I don't like t'at stuff so, tonight, I keep an eye on him. Some day somebody should break his nose, b-yesus."

"Somebody will," McQueen prophesied, wiping his hands on his shirt. Light from an open doorway fell across the churned mud at his feet. Something caught his eye. The impression of a huge shoe pac. McQueen was no tracker. Red-eye Jameson probably could have taken one look at that print and recognized it as the same as those they had seen on Tugidak. McQueen couldn't. The only similarity he could see was its size. But it was enough to remind him of the real business at hand. So he said, "Well, thanks. I would like to get cleaned up a little."

The *Nina* was, as Aasie had said, real pretty. She was a trim eighty-footer, high-bulwarked on the forward deck. They walked the whole length of the wharf to reach her, passing at least one guard post on the way. Midway between the next to last cannery and the *Nina's* berth, a hulking figure sitting on a piling spoke to them.

Bjornstad answered, "Yust me, Arne. How's it going?"

The man in the shadows said, "Half done, about."

As they came level with the vessel, McQueen strained his eyes through the murk. She was moored with her starboard rail against the wharf, headed out to sea. Opposite her, he could make out *RUSKIN & CO.* lettered on the unlight-

ed wharf shed. The *Nina's* only light shone over a companionway aft. Just the same, McQueen saw movement under the shed and heard the shuffle of feet and the rumble of wheels on planking. Something was going on.

Bjornstad led him down the aft companionway, squeezing his huge bulk together to get through. But the master's cabin below was roomy and comfortable. McQueen looked around him in surprise, comparing it with Swenson's, on the *Northern Cross*.

He said, "Quite a boat you've got."

"Yah, t'e *Nina* is a good vun. Ve even got a shower, right in through there. Use it if you vant to, v'ile you change your shirt."

McQUEEN found the shower, and took his first bath in nearly two weeks. Scraping the mud off his trousers, he took, also, a roll of adhesive tape with which he shifted a flat .380 from its armpit holster to the inside of his left calf, taping it so that the muzzle was just above his shoe tops. The holster he shoved deep in the ditty bag.

Bjornstad was waiting at the cabin table. On it he had placed a bottle and glasses and even a bowl of ice cubes. McQueen stared at them.

"Hot water in the shower and ice cubes, yet. What kind of a yacht is this?"

"She's a beauty," the big man told him, with pardonable pride. "She vas built by Barnard, in Seattle, vor a tuna visherman. She's even got t'e fish-hold refrigerated. Can carry vish in her vor a week, if you vant to."

"Yeah," McQueen thought. "Or fresh beef." He said, "By the way, my names Mason. Jack Mason.

"I'm Bjornstad. Everbody knows B-yesus Bjornstad. Sit and have a drink."

McQueen sat down. Bjornstad asked, "You come in on t'e *Cross*, didn't you, Mason? She's only vessel in vor two days. V'ere you come from?"

"I went on her in Anchorage. I've been up working on the base at Nine-Mile. I was going Outside with a stake but I stayed in Anchorage too long. I got into a four-five-six game in some joint outside of town and they cleaned me."

Bjornstad chuckled. "Morse Mixon's place, I bet yu. So now you're flat again?"

"That's right."

"V'at you going to do?"

McQueen shrugged. "Whatever comes along. I'm through with that old rock-head Swenson on the *Cross*, that I know."

"How you like to ship on t'e *Nina*? I pay top scale."

McQueen felt an involuntary shiver run down his spine. The bright blue eyes across the table were watching him. If it were true—as he was all but certain it was—that the *Nina* was about due at the next rendezvous at Tugidak, McQueen's first trip on her might well be his last, and one-way at that.

But he had to say, carelessly, "It's O.K. with me, Bjornstad. But I'm no sailor, nor grease-monkey either. I was just deckhand on the *Cross*."

Bjornstad grinned. "That's all I need, Mason. Yust a strong back and a weak mind. I got a lot of cargo to put aboard tonight and I'm short-handed."

"Where you headin' for?"

The blue eyes considered him. "Ve make a couple stops along t'e coast but ve put in at Kodiak before ve come back to Karluk."

"Can I make passage Outside between here and Kodiak? I've got about all I want of this damn weak-bladdered country."

"I t'ink so. It'll be a good voyage. Anyhow, ve'll make sure you don't have to come back to Karluk, Mason."

Again, McQueen felt that momentary chill. He had already made up his mind that when the *Nina* sailed, there would be nobody named McQueen—or Mason, either—in her crew. Whether it was the problematical depth at which the Navy liked to moor its channel mines or the faint overtone he thought he detected in Bjornstad's chuckle which was the decisive factor made no difference. He had no desire to test out either one.

He said, "O. K., Bjornstad. I'm your boy. You say you're loading tonight?"

"T'at's right. Come on. Ve put you to work."

Bjornstad took him to the wharf. The guard, Arne, came at the big man's whistle. Bjornstad said, "Ve got a new hand,

Arne. This is my bosun, Mason. Arne, you take Mason and get t'e other dolly and finish up vit' t'at stuff. I'll vatch t'e wharf."

McQueen followed Arne's surly grunt through the door into the wharf shed. He took the handles of the iron-wheeled hand truck which the bosun pointed out and followed the man through the shed toward a dimly lighted opening at the far end. As they approached it, two men with another truck, loaded, came through. McQueen recognized the rumble of the wheels on the planking as the same sound he had heard when he first went aboard the *Nina*.

McQueen stared at the second truck as it passed by him. A tarpaulin was thrown over it to hide the load but, whatever it was, it was bulky and plainly heavy. It didn't take much imagination to interpret its irregular outline and guess what was beneath the tarp.

A moment later, he no longer had to guess. Arne led the way through the shed's back door and across a narrow alley. There was no light at all in the alley or along the low cinder-block building on the bluff twenty feet above. Arne, in the lead, climbed a ramp up to the building and pushed at a heavy door at the top. It swung back into the double entrance of a cold storage vault. McQueen shoved the hand truck in and maneuvered around to pass through the second door as Arne hauled it open. A blast of icy air hit him in the face.

THERE was light inside the building, gleaming on frost-encrusted pipes and stone walls. Along one whole side of the thirty-foot room, Colonel Frayne's missing beef was piled in a row of frozen sides like cordwood.

McQueen had time to make a rapid estimate while the bosun was lifting one bony foreleg and growling for help. There were at least fifty sides left in the stack. And the two hands with the other dolly had been busy hauling since before McQueen had had his shower and the drink. That this was the Tugidak beef, there could no longer be a doubt.

McQueen also got his first look at the man, Arne. Squat, black-bearded, and with arms which fitted him like an ape's, the sight wasn't much. McQueen picked up the other end of the two-hundred pound side and complained.

"Damn thing's cold. You got gloves?"

Arne snarled something brief and unintelligible. McQueen said no more about it. There was no reason to make any more of a beef. He even felt good enough about it all so that he could grin at such feeble humor.

Frayne had sent him to find some beef. The beef had been found. McQueen was reasonably certain that this building was the "Northern Cold Storage" plant of Ruskin's which Aasie had told him about. At least he had seen Ruskin's other sign on the shed below. So there was nothing left for McQueen to do now but look out for his own hide and health.

Bjornstad was down on the wharf. The other two crew members he had seen would have just about reached the *Nina* with their load by this time. There was nobody to cope with but Arne. There was no reason to take that one in tonight, or Bjornstad, either. If the *Nina* kept her rendezvous with the sub and managed to escape the reception the Navy had arranged, a Coast Guard cutter could still pick her up with no trouble at all. In these days of constant air and radar search, no surface vessel could stay hidden long. Bjornstad and his crew would be corralled, in due course.

All McQueen had to do was get away. In the gloom inside the wharf shed, that should be no trick at all. They finished loading four of the sides on the truck and wheeled it down the steep incline to the shed entrance. As soon as they were well into the dark interior, McQueen on one handle and the bosun on the other, McQueen yanked hard on his side, swinging the dolly half around.

He exclaimed, making his voice as excited as he could manage without making too much noise, "Hey, Arne! The load's slippin' over this way! Gimme a hand!"

Cursing, the bosun let go his handle and came around to McQueen. The instant his squat figure was outlined in the lighter patch of the doorway, McQueen let go at the target he made, driving his right at Arne's midsection and hooking

his left into that black beard as the bosun toppled forward, his jaw dropping to emit a startled blast of air.

The man went down without another sound except the thud with which he landed. McQueen tipped the load of beef over on him, for insurance's sake, and ghosted back to the alley entrance. He turned to his right in the alley and prowled along the wall, heading toward the street lights high on the hill. As he passed the front end of the building from which they had taken the beef, the corner of his left eye caught a faint flicker of light from above. McQueen froze and waited.

At the end of minutes, when he had seen or heard nothing more, he charged it to nerves and went on up the hill. He was perhaps fifty yards farther when he heard the scream knife through the dark behind him.

Even as he whirled, he saw the white frost of sudden light on the mud at his feet. Two broad windows were aglow at the front of the building and a single huge bulb, outside, illuminated a painted sign:

NORTHERN COLD STORAGE
K. Ruskin

The scream had come from that building. McQueen could even see—if he hadn't recognized that voice—the shadow cast by struggling figures inside the two big windows.

He made it to the door in a dozen scrambling leaps and yanked it open. There was a large outer room and, across it, another door into a smaller cubicle with desks and office machinery. A blue-suited back, which McQueen remembered, had Aasie's unmistakably bright head forced back into the angle between a filing cabinet and the wall.

Ruskin was yelling at her in a voice high-pitched enough to make McQueen wonder which of them had actually been doing the screaming. Getting a hand on his shoulder, McQueen turned him and jolted one short punch against the trader's smooth-shaven jaw all in one motion.

Easing him to the floor, McQueen said, "Sorry I seem to make a business of beatin' up your boy friends, honey. But there's too much racket around here. Who did the first yelling?"

Aasie pulled down her jacket. "I did," she admitted. "The so-and-so sneaked in behind me and snapped on the lights. It startled me, was all."

"What the devil are you doing down here, anyway?"

"I knew Ruskin was going to fire me in the morning. The only chance I had to get those invoices you want was tonight. I slipped out the back door of the hotel but he must have been watching both entrances."

One of Ruskin's feet twitched. Mcqueen said, "Well, did you find what we're looking for?"

"I hadn't been here two minutes when he came charging in. I'll start going through the file."

"We haven't got time. Other things are going on around here. How near could you locate 'em? Could we take a whole drawer, or something like that?"

She looked at the filing cabinet, doubtfully. "The invoices are all in one drawer, yes. But it will be pretty big and bulky."

"I can tote it. Which one? By the way, you may have a room-mate in that place of yours tonight, after all. How about taking a poor homeless sailor in for the night?"

"What now, McQueen? While you're making your pitch—this is the drawer you want."

She pulled a drawer of the cabinet open, releasing the catch beneath it. McQueen hauled the thing out, a foot square and three times as long. He said, "Hit the lights. I'll tell you about it on the way."

HE DIDN'T get the opportunity. The stoop outside the front door creaked under heavy footsteps and the door crashed open. McQueen swung, the file drawer still in his arms, to face Bjornstad, Arne's scowling face at his shoulder.

There was a black service .45 in the big man's right hand, down flat against his leg. He said, "V'at t'e hell, Mason!"

He stopped in the middle of the outer office, his eyes flicking to Aasie and down at Ruskin on the floor. "T'e girl friend,

too. And Ruskin. V'at t'e hell goes on?"

His arms full of Ruskin's property, there wasn't much for McQueen to say. And this was as good a place for a showdown as any. So he said, "You know she works for Ruskin. I was just helping her pack up some homework."

Bjornstad chuckled. "Did she slug Ruskin? Vas t'at her homework? She ought to get time and a half for t'at." He spoke to the bosun. "See what shape he's in, Arne. Maybe he's got something to say about it."

Arne moved around him and came through the intervening doorway. There was an instant when he masked Bjornstad from McQueen but the distance between them was too great to risk a move. And the big man lifted the pistol ever so slightly but with unmistakable meaning. So McQueen had to be content with turning far enough to keep the steel file drawer between himself and the bosun. There was a vengeful glint in those black eyes. Undoubtedly, that beef McQueen had spilled on Arne had been cold as well as heavy.

The man picked Ruskin's head up and shook it. He slapped the trader's cheeks a couple of times with an ungentle hand. Ruskin groaned. After a moment, he retched a little and sat up, feeling his jaw.

He muttered, "Wha . . . Who hit me?"

"The lady," McQueen offered helpfully. "She doesn't like people backing her into corners."

Ruskin's eyes focused on McQueen and he came to his feet, snarling. "I knew you had something to do with it, when I trailed her down here, you—"

His choice of expression was nasty. McQueen made a motion at him with the drawer and Bjornstad said, "Take it easy, Mason. You yust keep that gadget in your hands right where it is."

To Ruskin, "So you followed her down here. V'at was she doing?"

"The damned witch opened the door with her key and went to messin' around in the office, here. She didn't turn the light on. I did that, to see what she was up to."

"V'at's t'at your friend Mason's got in his hands?" Ruksin peered at the file drawer. His eyes widened and swung back to Bjornstad. "It's all my shipping invoices!"

"Coming in or going out?"

"Both."

"I thought I told you to burn those things?"

McQueen noticed that most of the accent and all the amusement had disappeared from Bjornstad's voice. Ruskin had caught that, too. He fumbled, "Well, I have to keep some records. People know what comes in. Somebody might come around to find out where it went."

"Somebody has," Bjornstad told him. "Too bad you had to make it so easy for them to find out what they wanted to know. Arne!"

For the next thirty seconds, McQueen had an odd, detached feeling; as if he were watching all this on a movie screen and that it had no personal application to himself or Aasie, at all. The bosun had been standing against the wall behind Ruskin where he had placed himself after the trader had gotten back on his feet. For all McQueen knew, he may have had the eight-inch skinning knife in his hand all the time, waiting for the word from Bjornstad.

McQueen was no stranger to violence. He had seen men do things which would shame a shark. Yet it was with sheer unbelief that he saw Arne's long right arm snake around Ruskin's throat and his other hand drive the knife to its hilt under the trader's left shoulder blade.

After that, there was no telling what might come next. So McQueen, acting on the instant, did the only thing possible under the circumstances. He heaved the steel drawer straight at Bjornstad's head, pushing it out in front of him like a basketball and diving after it.

From the tail of his eye, he saw Aasie take cover behind the cabinet. Aasie had been in the midst of matters like this before. Then Bjornstad's arms were up to ward off the drawer, loose papers showering out of it to drift down like snow over the big man's shoulders. He shunted the drawer off and McQueen heard metal clang against the wall while he was still a yard away. He lowered his head and drove, aiming at Bjornstad's knees.

He made contact, hard, and they both

went down. Bjornstad landed, half-sitting, against the doorjamb, McQueen on his knees in front of him. The big man grunted and McQueen felt huge muscles heaving under him as Bjornstad's hands came down. He sensed rather than saw the dark shadow of the pistol barrel sweep down the wall as steel thudded against his head above the ear. The light exploded in myriad coruscations before McQueen's eyes and then went black.

CHAPTER V

MEAT FOR THE DOGFISH

WHEN McQueen awakened, the field of vision of his one open eye was filled with the distorted design of a red carpet and its texture was rough against his nose. Before he moved, he felt something else. The floor beneath him—at least, something beneath him—was in motion.

He pushed himself up, achingly. The first thing his eyes focused on as they raised was a pair of pants legs filled by something Bjornstad had never owned. McQueen's gaze traveled the rest of the way up to Aasie's face. She was looking down in mixed concern and anger.

McQueen sat up. "Aasie! What the hell!" He turned slowly. Bjornstad's bulk was planted solidly behind the heavy table McQueen remembered from the *Nina's* cabin.

Bjornstad chuckled. "Ho, t'e great Yonny McQueen! I had expected I would meet you, sooner or later. But I never guessed it would pay me so well, or I'd have looked you up before."

McQueen gave Aasie a disgusted glance. "Your pet!" he said. "You should have drowned him in the litter."

Aasie said nothing. She looked a little worried. McQueen felt his head experimentally and decided maybe she had reason. He said, turning again, "Well, Bjornstad, what's the deal? Murder, kidnapping . . . You're running up quite a bill."

The bushy brows went up. "Murder? Who have I murdered? Lately, t'at is?"

"Maybe you didn't actually use the knife on Ruskin. The law won't see much difference."

"Ruskin! My old friend Ruskin? *You* knifed him, McQueen. Your fingerprints are all they'll find on that knife-haft. I put 'em there. And they'll be all over t'at filing cabinet. Also, on t'e cash box ve emptied from t'e desk."

McQueen shook his head. "I don't get it," he admitted honestly. "What are you going to make out of all that?"

Bjornstad chuckled comfortably. "I vas a partner of Ruskin's. V'en t'ey find him dead and go to straighten things out, I vill be pretty soon running both ends of t'e business. I vould as soon have had Arne fix him long ago. He vas a fool and t'at's dangerous, in t'is business. But I didn't have anybody so handy to hang it on. Who yumped t'e *Cross* in Karluk? Who disappeared right after a fight with Ruskin, t'at fifty people saw? T'e only answer to all t'at—and the prints—vill be Yon McQueen."

McQueen shook his head. "You'll never get away with it, squarehead."

"I t'ink so. Of course, your friend Colonel Frayne could get you out of it. But not unless he's got you to tell v'at really happened."

There was that, all right. McQueen felt a little sick. He looked at Aasie. "There'll still be the kidnapping, Bjornstad. They never have stood for much of that stuff in the Territory. You may not even get a trial."

Bjornstad laughed again. "You mean Miss Aasie? She don't need to vorry about me. All I'm going to do to her is give her a little trip—if some people vant to take her. Of course, if they don't. . . . I'll admit I don't know v'at I'll have to do with her, then."

"Trip?"

"Sea voyage. Back to Okhotsk. Some friends I've got back there may vant to talk to her about, say, Colonel Frayne at Anchorage. And vun t'ing and another."

"Sea voyage, eh? In a submarine, maybe?"

Bjornstad slapped his leg and guffawed. "You know about t'at, do you? You're a smart feller, McQueen. You didn't make vun little mistake, you might have got old B-yesus, after all."

"What was that?" McQueen asked curiously.

"Shining up to Aasie, back in the King Bar. I knew about you, McQueen. T'ey told me v'at you looked like. Me and Ruskin, ve had been vatching little Aasie. V'en I see her brush off Ruskin vor a smelly fish camp bum, I t'ink, Ah-ha, t'at must be McQueen!"

McQueen glanced at Aasie and shrugged, apologetically. Bjornstad saw it. He said, "Don't t'ink it vas you got her brought aboard tonight, though. Ve vere going to take her, anyvay. These fellers back in Okhotsk vill have a lot of fun getting her to tell about v'at t'at feller Frayne is up to. You yust made it easy for me to grab her, getting her down to monkey vith Ruskin's files tonight."

McQueen's head was clearing. He got to his feet. They were steady enough under him to feel the throb of the driving diesels. Bjornstad, across the table, watched him calmly. McQueen said, "How about me, Bjornstad? Think you can send me to Okhotsk, too?"

The huge man wagged his head. "I'll ask t'em. Maybe t'ey vant you too; maybe not. If t'ey do, t'ey can have you. Otherwise . . ."

He paused, significantly. McQueen considered, staring at the bland eyes in the broad face. He could feel the .380 still strapped inside his pants-leg. But the pants leg was in his shoe top and he didn't think he'd have time to get it up, anyway. He had seen how fast this big man could move. The gun on his leg was his last ace and it wouldn't do to waste it. But he felt he had to do something.

Suddenly, he grasped the edge of the heavy table and heaved. Bolted to the floor, it didn't even give. Bjornstad laughed at him. What McQueen did then made no sense whatever. Leaning far over the table, off balance in order to reach, he drove his right fist straight at the bridge of Bjornstad's nose, between his eyes. He had thought that if he could blind the big man for a moment . . .

It didn't work. He did succeed in knocking Bjornstad backward off his chair. But he wasn't hurt and he was already rising as McQueen came around the table. In the close quarters of the cabin, outweighed fifty pounds, McQueen had no chance at all. Bjornstad drove him back against the wall with sheer weight and slammed him twice in the stomach with pile driver fists before McQueen could make himself room to fight back.

His knees sagged as the breath went out of him. Then a big fist came up against his head and once again the lights exploded into darkness.

WHEN he came to, this time, he was in a bunk. He lay for a long time waiting for the throbbing in his head to subside. As his mind began to work, he had a strangely peaceful feeling. It was all he could do to keep from slipping off again. It was quite a while before he realized that part of what was lulling him was a gentle, swaying motion, coupled with the dead quiet. The *Nina's* engines were stilled and she was swinging to her anchors.

There were few good aspects to his situation but one, at least, came suddenly to mind. If the *Nina* was at anchor, she must be in Tugidak harbor. She had

come safely through the entrance. McQueen gave silent thanks to whatever Navy crew it was which had planted those mines.

There was one more bright spot. For some reason he hadn't been tied. While he was puzzling over that, he had his first piece of luck since the whole sorry mess began. There was the sound of the door latch opening and, seconds later, the following click of the light switch.

It gave McQueen barely time to slump back on the bunk and shut his eyes. Through slitted lids as the light came on, he saw the man Arne at arm's length with a handful of trolling line. McQueen was still marveling when Arne, muttering to himself, bent to pull his legs together preparatory to lashing them.

McQueen had hardly time for it but he couldn't help wondering why Bjornstad had waited so long. Maybe the fracas in the cabin had occurred just as they sighted the Tugidak entrance and all hands were needed. Or Arne might have delayed on affairs of his own while getting the line, after he had dumped McQueen on the bunk. Perhaps Bjornstad simply had confidence in the anesthetic quality of his fists.

Whatever the reason, he had waited too long. McQueen lashed upward with his left leg, the one carrying the pistol. He caught Arne squarely under the chin with it, cracking the man's head against the steel support of the upper bunk. Coming up sitting in the same movement, he dug his fingers into hair and beard simultaneously and thumped the skull again on the steel rail with all his might. It was enough. Arne slumped like an empty sack.

Working swiftly, McQueen whipped the .380 off his leg and shoved it in his waistband. He dumped Arne into the bunk and gagged him, fastening the lashings to the bunk for good measure. Then, snapping off the light, he cracked the door and peered out.

The short passageway was dark and deserted. Straining his ears, he couldn't hear a sound above the slap of water against the hull and the faint hum of a generator somewhere forward. Not a whisper of human activity. All at once, McQueen guessed why it was that Bjornstad had made the error of not making sure of a prisoner. On his way to pick up another bunch of passengers, he must have left the rest of his crew in Karluk and come out with Arne, alone. The *Nina* was a big vessel for two pairs of hands to work.

A patch of lighter shadow showed McQueen the aft companionway. He made his way cautiously to it and up to the deck. He came out on the starboard side, even with where the bulwark ended and the rail began. The *Nina* was anchored with the harbor entrance just abaft her starboard beam.

His head at deck level and his body still in the companionway, McQueen glanced up at the riding lights. He could just see the masthead. As he watched, it winked once and then remained dark. McQueen stiffened, his eyes searching out the headland which marked the harbor bar, a mile away.

The night was blackly overcast. What little light there was came from the phosphorescent shimmer of the water. By it, McQueen could distinguish only the vaguest outlines of the gear on the *Nina's* deck. Bjornstad, he supposed, was in the pilot-house. Aasie must be below in another one of the cabins.

McQueen estimated the situation. If, by any chance, something should go wrong with the Navy's mines, it would behoove McQueen and company to be well off the *Nina* before that sub surfaced alongside. And the shoreline was faint in the distance. Too far to swim in North Pacific water. They'd need the dinghy.

That meant Bjornstad had to be disposed of. The .380 in his fist, McQueen slid out of the shelter of the companionway. He made his way forward, hugging the superstructure on his left. He had taken a half-dozen steps when he heard the muted scrape of rubber soles on the rungs of the pilot-house ladder, and the creak of the stanchions under weight.

Bjornstad's bulk loomed in the passageway as he dropped off the ladder. He turned aft, coming towards McQueen, his voice booming out impatiently.

"Arne! V'er t'e hell are you?"

McQueen stepped out, the .380 low and solid in his fist. "He's busy, squarehead. And if you can't see it, there's a gun in your gut. I wouldn't need much excuse."

The looming shadow stopped two paces from McQueen, Bjornstad laughed softly. "You again, McQueen? I knew I should have dropped you over t'e side. You sure you got gun? V'ere you get it?"

"Move and see."

"I take your vord for it. I told you I knew you vas a smart feller. Now you got me, v'at you going to do vit' me?"

"Turn around."

The huge body rotated. McQueen snapped, "Now back up, towards me, slow!"

Bjornstad's feet shuffled on the planking. He chuckled again and started to say something. McQueen never knew what it was.

A pile-driver hit the *Nina* below waterline. The little vessel shuddered, a convulsive tremor running the length of her. Then she heeled sharply to port, slamming McQueen hard against the superstructure.

THE SOUND of the explosion came seconds later, as McQueen was dazedly trying to regain his footing on the heaving deck. A gigantic gray geyser spouted at the harbor mouth, the base of it shot with orange flame. McQueen, shocked into staring immobility, caught a fleeting glimpse of a great black snout tilting up into the holocaust for an instant before it sank finally from sight.

Waves from the vast upheaval continued to rock the *Nina* for minutes. McQueen bent his knees and strained his light-blinded eyes for Bjornstad. A quick breath of wind parted the overcast and pale light from a fast-dying moon painted the deck.

The big man was on his hands and knees against the bulwark. As McQueen faced him, he staggered to his feet, swaying. McQueen yelled, "Hold it, damn you!" Bjornstad did not seem to hear.

His arms dangling, he shuffled forward. McQueen yelled at him again, then snapped two quick shots at the tree-trunk legs. Whether or not he missed he never knew. He had time for no more. One of those long, ape-like arms snaked out and a hand clamped on McQueen's wrist. It pulled him forward and they both fell to the deck, rolling over and over until they finally brought up hard against the rail.

The terrible grip on McQueen's wrist numbed his hand. His fingers relaxed and the pistol clattered into the metal gunnel. The sound seemed to bring Bjornstad back to his senses. It also became his undoing.

Until that moment, McQueen had been helpless in that bear-like grasp. When Bjornstad let him go to scrabble after the pistol, McQueen got his feet widespread under him again. As Bjornstad stooped, McQueen threw his still good left in a looping punch from his hip, twisting his whole body behind it.

His fist cracked against Bjornstad's ear, knocking him over on his side and driving him away from the pistol. He reached for it once more and McQueen hit him again, this time full in the face.

Roaring, spitting blood and teeth, the huge man came to his feet and charged, at last forgetting the gun. McQueen, feeling strength returning to his right forearm, set himself and hammered both hands to Bjornstad's head. Bjornstad staggered and McQueen, turning his own back away from the rail, kept him off balance and stumbling across the deck under a rain of swinging, full-armed hammer-like blows.

One more step and Bjornstad crashed against the bulwark, the top of the rail catching him at mid-thigh. His momentum toppled him over. A mighty splash echoed upward as McQueen leaned, panting for breath, over the rail and waited.

The surface of the bay smoothed out, the last faint ripples sucking quietly at the *Nina's* planking. McQueen watched and listened, nursing his shattered knuckles.

Nothing broke the deathly stillness.

"That last salvo must have got the big bastard," he decided, at last. "I guess he's meat for the dogfish and the king crabs now."

He raised his eyes to the harbor entrance. Fading moonlight silvered placid water. McQueen shivered a little and muttered, "Lots of traffic across the River this night, all right. Well, they came looking for it."

Turning away from the rail, he started below to look for Aasie. It was still a long time until daylight.

POSTED MISSING

By Bill Adams

It's a hell of a deal in a deep-sea ship
When there's scarce the water to wet your lip.

In the dogwatch, whacking out the water,
Singing of Shenandoah's daughter,
Chips suddenly stopped. "Mister mate," he said,
And you could note in his tones the dread,
"The tank's near dry. If it don't soon rain
When'll I see me wife again?"

"Well, why ask me?" the first mate growled,
And told the skipper. The Old Man scowled,
"No more coffee, and no more tea.
The pork must be boiled in the soup," said he.
So they ate their hardtack, hard as stone,
Without any tea when their job was done,
And called it supper. The moon sailed high.
Sheet lightning flickered the windless sky.

A bottle-nosed shark swam under her rail,
With his eye upturned to her lifeless sail.
A little apprentice, down on his knees,
Prayed to the Lord to send a breeze
To speed the ship toward home again.
And please be sure the wind brings rain.

Nobody saw how long she lay,
Still as a picture, night and day.
Nobody saw the doom she met,
Capsized in a squall with all sail set,
Her crew too weak to lower a sail.
Only, slow swimming beneath her rail,
The big blue bottle-nosed shark accurst,
Who knew what happens when sailors thirst.

It's a hell of a deal in a deep-sea ship
When there's scarce the water to wet your lip!

DECORATION BY L. STERNE STEVENS

"You're covered, Skipper," the plump Hawaiian steward told Carr.

SAY IT WITH PEARLS

ILLUSTRATED BY V. E. PYLES

●

By

ALLAN

VAUGHAN

ELSTON

JEFFERSON CARR wrote *For Your Birthday* on his card and handed it to the florist. "A dozen roses," he said. "Send them to Mrs. Myra Shawn at 1446 Plumbago Terrace."

He left the shop and swung off down Market Street toward the water front. Tall, personable and in his vigorous forties, his braided shipmaster's uniform made Carr a figure to look at twice. A good many women in San Francisco would have been glad to receive roses, or any attention at all, from Captain Carr of the steam freighter *Dolphin*.

The *Dolphin*, moored at her pier, was loading lard for Auckland. Winches were singing as Carr went aboard. "We'll be ready to clear," the mate told him, "by noon tide tomorrow."

All hatches were battened by noon the next day and Carr had his clearance. A pilot came on to take them out through the Gate. Skipper Carr was in his cabin, making ready to go up on the bridge, when Steward Harry Pond sidled in.

With an impudent grin Harry handed his skipper a small and faintly scented envelope. Carr had been expecting it. Myra Shawn was always punctilious in acknowledging any such attention as he had shown her yesterday.

From the envelope he took her card on which was written, *Thanks for remembering—Myra.*

Harry Pond piped up, "Looks like yer mikin' time, Cap'n."

Carr gave him a sharp look. "Time?" he snapped.

The little cockney's eyelid drooped and his smirk widened. "I mean time with that widder lidy, Cap'n. I seen 'er when yer 'ad 'er aboard fer tiffin, larst time we 'ooked up 'ere. Says I to meself, if she's got a lidy's mite wot's 'arf the looker she is, I wouldn't mind seein' 'er come aboard fer keeps."

This insolence was unprecedented and brought red to Carr's face. His glare made Harry Pond back hastily toward the exit. "I didn't mean no disrespect, Cap'n. 'Ornest I didn't."

"You'll keep a civil tongue in your head, steward. Get out."

When he was alone, Carr opened a private wall safe. In it he carefully filed the three-word note of thanks from Myra Shawn.

An hour later the *Dolphin* was piloted out through the Gate. The pilot boat turned back. Carr, taking the bridge himself, set a course for Honolulu. The ship plied regularly between San Francisco and the Antipodes, making three round trips a year. Going down she made Hawaii, New Caledonia, New Zealand and Australia; returning she made the Fijis, Samoa, the Cooks and the French sphere around Tahiti. For more than twelve years Carr had steamed that circuit, in this same stout bottom.

IT WAS some two months later when the *Dolphin* poked in through the reef at Vasaii. Since this remote lagoon in the Marquesas rarely offered much cargo, the *Dolphin* only called here every third trip.

This time there were a few barges of copra to take on. Carr left his mate in charge and rowed ashore.

Although it was steaming hot, he wore his best braided whites. Stopping briefly at the residency, he exchanged salutations with the French resident there. Then he engaged the dilapidated one-horse hack which served as a taxi.

"To the Halliday plantation."

The hack creaked up a rutty shell road. After a few kilometers the jungle opened to expose cacao-bean trees planted in neat rows. The grove was well weeded and a vine-clad pandanus log house gave the place an air of more than average prosperity. John Halliday was a hard worker himself, and he had a genius for handling native labor.

Alighting, Carr directed the hackman to wait.

An elderly Marquesan, Halliday's housekeeper, admitted him. Her face lighted. She remembered this big, handsome skipper, naturally, because he'd called here once a year for ten years.

She summoned her employer. Carr tipped her a coin, as usual.

The man the island knew as John Halliday came bounding in. His face, although thin and yellowed by malaria, still had firm lines of strength and character. His voice, greeting Carr, was pitifully eager. "Jeff, old pal! I knew you'd come." A hundred questions hung on his lips. He checked them only because the Marquesan woman was standing by. To get rid of her, he dispatched her on an errand to his overseer in the fields.

When they were alone—"How is she, Jeff?"

Carr smiled, helping himself to rum from a decanter. "As trim and pretty as ever, Joe."

"You gave it to her?"

"Of course. And she sent the usual receipt." Carr took from his wallet a card on which was written, in Myra Shawn's handwriting, *Thanks for remembering—Myra.*

Over his rum Carr looked benignly at Joseph Shawn, whom, now that they were alone, he need no longer call John Halliday. "She doesn't dare say more, Joe. Not since the police intercepted that letter. They still figure she's in touch with you, through me. And they're watching her like hawks."

Shawn gave a resigned sigh. "Of course, Jeff. Best she doesn't take any chances." He added anxiously, "You've never told her where I am, have you?"

"No. You made me promise not to. If I did she might try joining you here. And that would mean—"

"It would mean my neck," Shawn agreed bitterly. "So all I can do is send her an anniversary present once a year. Lucky I've got a friend like you, that I can trust, whose schedule puts him in San Francisco on the twentieth of every April."

Carr shrugged. "No trouble at all, Joe."

"She still thinks I'm innocent?"

"Right, Joe."

"I am," the fugitive swore fiercely. "Before God I never killed that man."

A court, nevertheless, had convicted Shawn. With a death sentence hanging over him he had escaped and stowed away on Carr's ship. And now, for ten years, Carr had been the messenger of an annual gift from Joe Shawn to his wife.

Always it was to be delivered on April 20, the anniversary of Joe's and Myra's wedding.

"One for every year I've been forced to desert her," Joe brooded. "I'll get you the one for next April now, Jeff, since I won't see you again before then."

Shawn went out and in a minute came back with a single white pearl. Carr took it, balanced it admiringly in his palm. "About eight pearl-grains, I'd say, just like the others. Where do you get 'em, Joe?"

"A pearler stops in every now and then," Shawn said. "I make just about enough profit on this plantation to buy one a year for Myra. And this is to cover the duty on it, Jeff."

He gave Carr a sheaf of French money worth about two hundred American dollars. It would take that much to get the pearl legally ashore at San Francisco.

Carr pouched the money and the pearl. He arose to go. "See you again next year, Joe."

"But you haven't told me," Joe Shawn protested, "about little Josephine! How is she?"

Carr grinned and lingered for another drink. "Growin' like a weed, Joe. She's in the Brownie Scouts now, Myra said. Hell, I almost forgot. Myra said to give you this." Carr fished from his pocket a snapshot of a ten-year-old girl.

A glow came to Shawn's eyes. He let them feast on it a few minutes, then filed the snapshot in an album along with others Carr had brought him from year to year. Pictures of the wife Joe Shawn hadn't seen for ten years and the child he'd never seen at all.

TWO HOURS later Carr was back aboard the *Dolphin*. In his cabin there he opened his private safe and took out a small, plush-lined box. When he opened the box, nine pearls lay exposed there.

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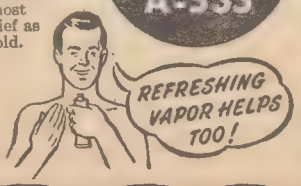

from the miseries of CHEST COLDS • SORE THROAT COUGHS • ACHES and PAINS

Carr put the tenth one with the others.

The hawse pipe chain rattled and the ship began moving out. Carr locked the pearls in his safe and rang for Harry Pond.

"A rum punch, steward."

Harry Pond brought the drink. Serving it he smirked, "Do any tridin' 'ere, Cap'n?"

The slyness in his tone drew a hard stare from Carr. "Only what you saw come over the rail, steward. That'll be all now."

As Pond sidled out, Carr worried a little. A nosy little rat, that limey. He was the only man of the crew who'd been aboard all through the last ten years. Sometimes Carr wondered if Harry Pond knew things he shouldn't know.

But how could he? Everything was too well covered up. A smart turn of trading, by Carr's standards. Each year a ten dollar box of roses for a thousand dollar pearl. And the cash Shawn gave him each year, an import duty, was pure velvet.

Seven bells struck and Carr checked the time by his watch. Sight of it reminded him of another watch—the one he himself had given Shawn, ten years ago, as a receipt for the first pearl. Engraved on its case was—*With love, from Myra.*

A gift for a gift! To Shawn it had seemed to prove contact between his messenger and Myra. It had looked like a receipt for the pearl. Inevitably it had helped to keep the flow of pearls moving, one a year.

And that, from the outset, had been exactly Carr's problem. The fugitive's zeal might flag. Many a man has resolved to give his wife a wedding anniversary present each year and then failed to keep it up. This would be especially true of a man hopelessly separated from his wife for life. A man's sentiment, in such a situation, must be hopped up.

This Carr had accomplished by three ruses.

First with a watch inscribed, *With love, from Myra.*

Second by inventing a daughter and naming her Josephine. Actually Josephine didn't exist. But a man believes what he wants to believe. The news, for a moment, had confounded Shawn. Then avidly he had hugged it to his lonely heart. "A cute little bundle," Carr told him, "born about seven months after your arrest." Producing a snapshot a year had been simple enough. The landlady at Carr's Frisco boarding house had a child the right age. It was easy to take a snap of her once a year.

And third by creating an illusion in Shawn's mind that Myra, after receiving the first pearl, had actually brought a letter to Carr's ship to be delivered by hand from Carr to Shawn. But detectives, Carr claimed, had accosted Myra at the gangplank. They had questioned her sharply. Was she in touch with her husband? Was she communicating with him through someone on this ship? Myra, timid and unskilled at dissembling, had wilted under the quizzing. The detectives had searched her handbag and found a letter to Joe. A long, adoring letter thanking him for a pearl, assuring him she was confident of his innocence and would love him always. Since nothing in the letter gave Joe's address, it didn't lead the police to him. "All it did," Carr told Shawn, "was scare hell out of Myra, make the police watch her closer than ever, and get me in Dutch with my owners. My owners had me on the carpet, told me they didn't want any more scandals, reminding me that the police might search the *Dolphin* any time, on the excuse of looking for narcotics, and if they ever found a letter being smuggled out to you, I'd be sacked."

The whole story was trumped up, but Shawn believed it. After that he himself had insisted that Myra send only verbal messages by Carr; in writing she must limit herself to some impersonal acknowledgment which, even if intercepted, couldn't be identified as a communication from wife to husband.

But it had taken even more than that. Since Carr was supposed to be delivering a pearl a year to a certain San Francisco cottage, Shawn would expect him to know details of the atmosphere there. He'd ask intimate questions about Myra's home and life.

So upon arriving at San Francisco with the second annual pearl, Carr had set forth to get acquainted with Myra. Driving a rented car, he deliberately stalled

it in the street in front of her cottage.

He rang her doorbell and when she appeared he was pleasantly impressed. A nurse, he saw by her uniform. "May I use your phone to call a garage, ma'am?"

He was quite welcome. She was young and slender and blonde—that was nine years ago, of course. As she led him to a telephone Carr noted a few details of the house. Things he could mention casually to Shawn.

He made sure she didn't see him drop his wallet by the phone. His name and the name of his line were on the wallet. He made the call. Then—"Thanks, ma'am," and he was gone as though he would never see her again.

But naturally he did, when she notified his line office that she'd found his wallet. Calling at her house for it made the second brief meeting. The third came a week later when he bumped into her at the entrance of her hospital. He pretended to have just called on a shipmate who was laid up there. Actually he'd timed it for the moment he knew she'd be going off duty. "May I give you a lift home, Mrs. Shawn?"

He could, and did, and was invited in for a cup of tea.

Even then Carr was too canny to rush things. All he did was drop a glass ashtray, breaking it. With an apology he left her. But at Honolulu he bought an exquisite Oriental ashtray. And months later, in San Francisco, he called with it at the Plumbago Terrace cottage.

"In humble amends for my awkwardness, Mrs. Shawn."

HE MADE a fine, courtly figure in his cap and braid—not the kind a lonely young widow feels like driving from her door. Three times a year the *Dolphin* tied up at San Francisco, for several weeks each trip. And it wasn't long before Carr knew Myra well enough to take her places. To dinner and to shows. Well enough to take an occasional snapshot of her, pictures which he later handed Joe Shawn as gifts from Myra. Finally well enough to send flowers on her birthdays.

His rewards were annual notes of acknowledgment in her own handwriting, usually with some such impersonal phrasing as *Thanks for remembering—Myra.*

To Joe Shawn the notes always seemed to say, *Thank you, dear, for remembering our anniversary with a pearl.*

Not once was Joe Shawn's name ever mentioned between Carr and Myra. She had no faint idea that Carr had ever known or seen Shawn. But Carr, in time, inevitably met a few of her older friends. And from these he learned that Myra considered herself a widow. So, in fact, did the police and all San Francisco. For Shawn's escape had been accomplished by diving over the rail of a bay ferry, in a fog, while crossing in the custody of two guards. One guard had relieved the other, and as they changed handcuffs from wrist to wrist Shawn had jerked free, disapearing in the fog-shrouded bay with a short chain dangling. Presumption was that he had drowned.

The complication for Carr, now, was that what began as a game became a web. All he'd wanted, at first, was a pearl a year and evidence of delivery sufficient to impress Shawn. Yet as the years passed, Carr found that he wanted Myra herself. Each cruise he found himself more and more eager to make the home port. Myra was always gracious, and she seemed to grow lovelier all the time. Why not ship a mate for life? He could even take her to sea with him on occasion. Nor need it interfere with the flow of pearls. Shawn wouldn't know if his wife remarried. And so the pearls would still flow one a year—like bright, stupid tears from the eyes of Joseph Shawn.

Personal vanity made Carr cocksure she wouldn't refuse him. He even bought the ring. But she did refuse him, and with startling finality. It was on a night at her house in the sixth year.

"No, Jeff. You've been awfully sweet and kind. You're a wonderful friend. I like you—but love is something else."

A mood of sadness possessed her and Carr knew she was thinking of Joe Shawn. It nettled him. What could Shawn be other than a dim memory? Shawn, long buried in a tropic jungle! Yet here he was, like a vital presence in this room, standing triumphantly between them.

But give her time, Carr thought. Some

day he'd break her down. He kept the ring. Back aboard the *Dolphin,* he put it with six pearls in the safe.

Often he thought of selling the pearls. For two reasons he didn't. By keeping them aboard he avoided paying import duty. Also their normal increase in value through the years was in excess of interest on cash in the bank.

It was in the seventh year, with seven intercepted pearls in the safe, that Carr found Myra in a mood of suppressed elation. She didn't tell him why. She only let Carr have one date that trip, and it disturbed him. Had some other man come into her life?

Of one of her older friends, a doctor at the hospital, Carr asked, "What's happened to Myra?"

"Haven't you heard? Take a look at last Sunday's *Chronicle.*"

The *Chronicle* item, when he looked it up, jolted Carr. The key witness in an old murder trial had just admitted perjury. As a result the conviction had been declared a mistrial and the condemned man, Joseph Shawn, was no longer considered guilty. Shawn, the item said, was thought to have drowned while escaping from a ferry. If alive, his whereabouts were unknown.

At first it seemed to Carr that his own game was up. Then he realized it wasn't. Small chance that Shawn at his remote hideout would ever see that item. If others in that part of the world should see it, they would hardly connect a planter named Halliday with an escapee once known as Shawn.

Carr was cautious at his next call on Shawn. But the fugitive, he saw with relief, knew nothing. There he was, as always, tremulously eager for news of his wife and child. Trustfully, even gratefully, he presented the eighth pearl.

There was always the bare possibility, Carr realized, that Shawn in his eagerness to see wife and daughter might risk a trip to the States. He might travel as a tourist named Halliday, braving all hazards for a glimpse of them. But if he did, he would surely go on Carr's ship. In that event Carr knew grimly what he must do. There was a long, lonely stretch of sea between Vasafi and Frisco, and many a dark night. If a passenger were to be lost overboard—! But Carr hoped it wouldn't come to that. For one thing, it would stop the flow of pearls.

AND NOW, with ten pearls in the safe, Carr steamed north to San Francisco. The *Dolphin* made her pier on schedule, the sixth of April. For the next three weeks she'd be discharging and taking on cargo. Except for a few formalities, the mate could take care of that. Carr donned his nattiest uniform and went courting ashore.

The Market Street florist knew him well by now. "I saved some beauties for you, Captain."

While the roses were being boxed Carr wrote on a card: *Supper at the 49 Club, Myra? I'll be at the line office till six. Will you give me a ring there, please?—Jeff.*

Then Carr saw an apish face pressed against the plate glass front window. The face wore an impudent smirk.

Harry Pond! That nosy little steward must have followed him here from the ship. Carr damned him under his breath.

Then, stiffly to the florist—"Same address. And get them out there right away."

He hurried outside to lay hands on Harry Pond. But the cockney had slipped away down the crowded walk.

Carr went on to his line office. The call from Myra came just before six. "Welcome back, sailor." The graciousness in her voice thrilled him. "And they're lovely, as always. I really don't deserve it, you know."

Yes, of course she'd go to the 49 Club with him.

They made a striking couple, dancing there. Myra Shawn, at thirty-five, still looked a girlish twenty-three. Her cheek, brushing Carr's, was cool velvet.

Twice while the *Dolphin* took cargo they went there. Carr remembered the ring in his safe. He'd get it out, next trip, and try again.

Sailing day was the 26th.

At the scheduled departure hour the mate reported to Carr on deck. "We're ready to stand off, Cap'n, except we're one hand short."

"Which hand?"

"That limey steward. The beggar went ashore when we tied up here and no one's seen him since."

Pond, Carr assumed, had realized he was in the skipper's bad graces and so had jumped ship. "We'll sail without him. Pick up a steward at Honolulu."

"Aye, sir." The mate went to the bridge and Carr repaired to his cabin.

And there, seated cockily in the skipper's lounge chair, was Harry Pond. Pond was in civvies. A checkered suit and a center-creased velour hat made him look more impertinent than ever.

"I ain't workin' fer yer no more, Cap'n. I've quit the blarsted sea. I plans to start me a pub ashore."

"Get out of here," Carr blazed.

Harry Pond smirked. "Not so fast, Cap'n. Wot abowt loanin' me a thousand quid to start that pub with? Yer wouldn't turn down an awld shipmite, would yer?"

Carr held his punch. This was a shakedown, plain enough, and had to be handled with gloves.

"Who saw you come aboard?"

"Nobody. I dawn't mean to give yer away 'less I 'arve to, Cap'n."

"Give what away?" Carr stood alertly between Pond and the door.

"Yer gime, wotever it is. It's got somethin' to do with that planter on Vasaii, right enough. And it's got something to do with a lidy nimed Myra. I ain't been silin' with yer twelve years with me eyes shut. I follered yer to that plantation one day, I did. I 'eard yer call the bloke Joe and I 'eard yer talk abowt a lidy nimed Myra. And I seen 'im slip yer a pearl. Wot's the gime, Cap'n?"

Carr tensed his muscles. When he closed in, it must be fast.

"I mide a few inquiries in the lidy's nighbor'ood, Cap'n. She ain't got no darter nimed Josephine. But she once 'ad a 'usband nimed Joe."

Carr sprang, then. His fingers, gripping Pond's throat, shut off all outcry.

WHEN the midnight watch went on, the *Dolphin* was well to sea. Carr gave orders which put all off-bridge hands of the watch on port deck duties. His own cabin gave to starboard and it was a cloudy night.

In the bathroom of his cabin he weighted Pond's body. Over the starboard rail it went, splashing unseen in the sea.

The menace of Pond was gone, now. Certainly no one knew he'd come aboard. Yet for a week the memory of it haunted Carr. It left a gray imprint on his face and for days he had his meals served in his cabin. It wasn't easy to meet the level honest eyes of his officers.

Gradually it wore off. He was almost himself again when, ten days out of Frisco, the *Dolphin* made pier at Honolulu. A shipment of roofing paper went off here and a few tons of pineapples for Sydney came on. Carr let his mate handle it. "And don't forget to pick up a steward, Mr. Dobbs."

The steward Dobbs picked up was a short, plump Hawaiian.

Thereafter, as the ship plied southward across the line, Carr's morale improved rapidly. Ruddy confidence came back to his face. Off the Gilberts he opened his safe and took a peep at the pearls. There lay the ring he'd bought for Myra. He'd talk her into it, he swore, next time he was in Frisco. The thought made him glow. He put the pearls away and rang for a rum punch.

The new steward came shuffling in with it. A bit on the lazy side, Carr thought. At that, he'd be an improvement over a shifty snooper like Pond.

Late May found the *Dolphin* at Noumea and early June brought her to Auckland. The main cargo was for Auckland and they tied up a week there. Then westerly across the Tasman Sea to Sydney, to deliver pineapples and take on hides.

By the time the ship cleared Sydney, Harry Pond wasn't even a memory.

Late June found them cruising northeasterly toward the Cooks. A day at Rorotonga and then on toward the French sphere. The *Dolphin* wasn't due to call at Vasaii this trip. The nearest stop would be Papeete, on the island of Tahiti.

Exactly on schedule, July 8, Carr made Papeete. He dropped the hook well out, as usual, and changed his whites for an evening in the cafes ashore.

It was nearly midnight when he came

back aboard. "Hi, Jeff," a familiar voice whispered just as Carr came on deck. "May I see you alone, please?"

It was dark and the man was bearded. Only by the voice did Carr recognize Joseph Shawn. What the devil was Shawn doing six hundred miles from Vasaii?

Carr took him to his cabin. Shawn, he saw, was nervously excited. "I'm gonna risk it, Jeff," he confided. "I can't stand it any longer."

"Risk what?"

"A sneak trip to Frisco and back," Joe said. "I can travel as Halliday and with this beard, who'll know the difference after ten years? I just got to see Myra and the kid, Jeff."

Carr took his time answering. This was a possibility he'd worried about more than once. He must block it, some way.

"You're stepping right into the gas chamber, Joe," Carr warned. "Cops 'll pick you up. They're bound to. Don't be a fool."

"It's a chance I've gotta take," Shawn insisted stubbornly. "For ten years I've been buried alive. I've just gotta see 'em, Jeff. Myra and the kid."

"Not on my ship," Carr said. "I'd lose my ticket. And be convicted myself as an accessory. Look, Joe, you just can't do it. Think of Myra. Think of the little girl. Your name spread all over the papers. Murderer executed. It'd wreck their lives."

Joe Shawn argued it out earnestly. "Listen, Jeff. You've done plenty for me. I just ask one last thing. You sign me on as a deck hand for this one cruise. I'm John Halliday, a roustabout on your crew. You'll be in Frisco three weeks. I slip ashore and see Myra. She hides me at home for three weeks. Then you take me back to Vasaii and I stay there the rest of my life."

"No," Carr said firmly. "You go back to Vasaii right now and lie low."

"I'm going to Frisco, Jeff. If you won't take me, then I'll book as a tourist named Halliday on the first ship I can find."

Carr saw he meant it. It put the chill of fear in his spine. Better for Shawn to go on this ship than on another. On this ship Shawn could be handled like Pond.

"You're a damned fool, Joe," Carr growled. "But if you like the smell of gas, I guess I can't stop you."

"You'll take me?"

Carr nodded. "I can sign you on as supercargo under the name Halliday."

"I knew you would!" Joe Shawn exulted gratefully. "Thanks a million, Jeff. I'll bring my duffel on in the morning."

CARR spent brooding days planning it. He must pick a dark night. Four thousand miles from Tahiti to Frisco. Somewhere in that yawning distance Shawn must disappear from the ship. Suspicion might whisper. But there could never be proof. A supercargo named Halliday is lost at sea. So what? How could you connect it with a fugitive named Shawn? All was safe if Shawn didn't make port. All was lost if he did.

For a creeping thousand miles Carr waited and planned. Waited for the dark of the moon. The man known to the crew as Halliday, being supercargo, ate in the salon with the officers. The plump, brown steward from Honolulu served them. Carr made it a point to show a casual, impersonal interest in Halliday.

Shawn let the beard grow. It made him look older than his years. But it failed to hide his vivid, eager excitement as each day brought him closer to the wife he hadn't seen for ten years.

On the night of August first the moon was at its darkest. The position was about

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two thousand miles off Mexico. Carr waited till the midnight watch changed. No one was on duty above decks except the bridge watch and one forward lookout.

It was a sweltering tropic night. Joe Shawn was asleep with his door open.

Carr put a blackjack in his hip pocket and slipped in there. Heavy breathing told him Shawn was sleeping soundly. Carr went to the door and peered both ways along the deck. The deck was like ink, and deserted.

He groped back to the bunk and took out his blackjack. To aim his blow, he flashed a beam of light on the sleeper's head. Then he struck. To stun was enough. The sea would do the rest.

Carr picked up the stunned man and staggered through the door. Over the baffle step and out on the dark deck. One step to the rail. No time to weight the victim. Carr got Shawn's head and torso over the rail and then pushed mightily.

Then a voice spoke from the dark. "You're covered, Skipper."

An electric torch flashed in Carr's face. The plump, Hawaiian steward was holding it. The steward's other hand held a police gun and the muzzle was poking Carr's ribs.

Panic choked Carr. He saw now that Joe Shawn hadn't quite gone over the rail. The tall figure of the mate, Dobbs, loomed beside the steward. Dobbs had a grip on Shawn's ankle and was pulling him back on deck.

"Mutiny!" Carr sputtered. "Lock this steward up."

"Aye, sir," Dobbs answered coldly. "You're the skipper, and if you say lock him up, we lock him up. But he's not a steward. His name's Kanala. He's a deputy U. S. marshal from the Territory of Hawaii."

"To many charges which I have against you, Captain," the Hawaiian purred politely, "I must now add one more. Attempted murder of a passenger. You are a witness, Mr. Dobbs?"

"I'm a witness," Dobbs said grimly. To Carr he said, "Before we lock Mr. Kanala up, hadn't we better hear his report?"

Without waiting for an answer Dobbs blew a whistle and a man of the watch came running. "Bring Mr. Halliday to," the mate directed, "and put him to bed."

Fury roared in Carr's head. Fury and impotence. Bluster about mutiny as he would, it could do him no good in the end. He could hold command only till they reached port. Best to know the worst. What was this report of Kanala's?

Carr strode unsteadily to his cabin and the others followed. The mate snapped on a light there. "Your report, Mr. Kanala?"

"On the morning of April 27," the Hawaiian recited glibly, "purse seiners off Golden Gate have half mile of seine out. They pull in four tons of sardines and one body. Body has been throttled, weighted and thrown from ship. Body is taken ashore and identified as Henry Pond, steward of the *Dolphin*. The *Dolphin* has passed spot of murder only one day before.

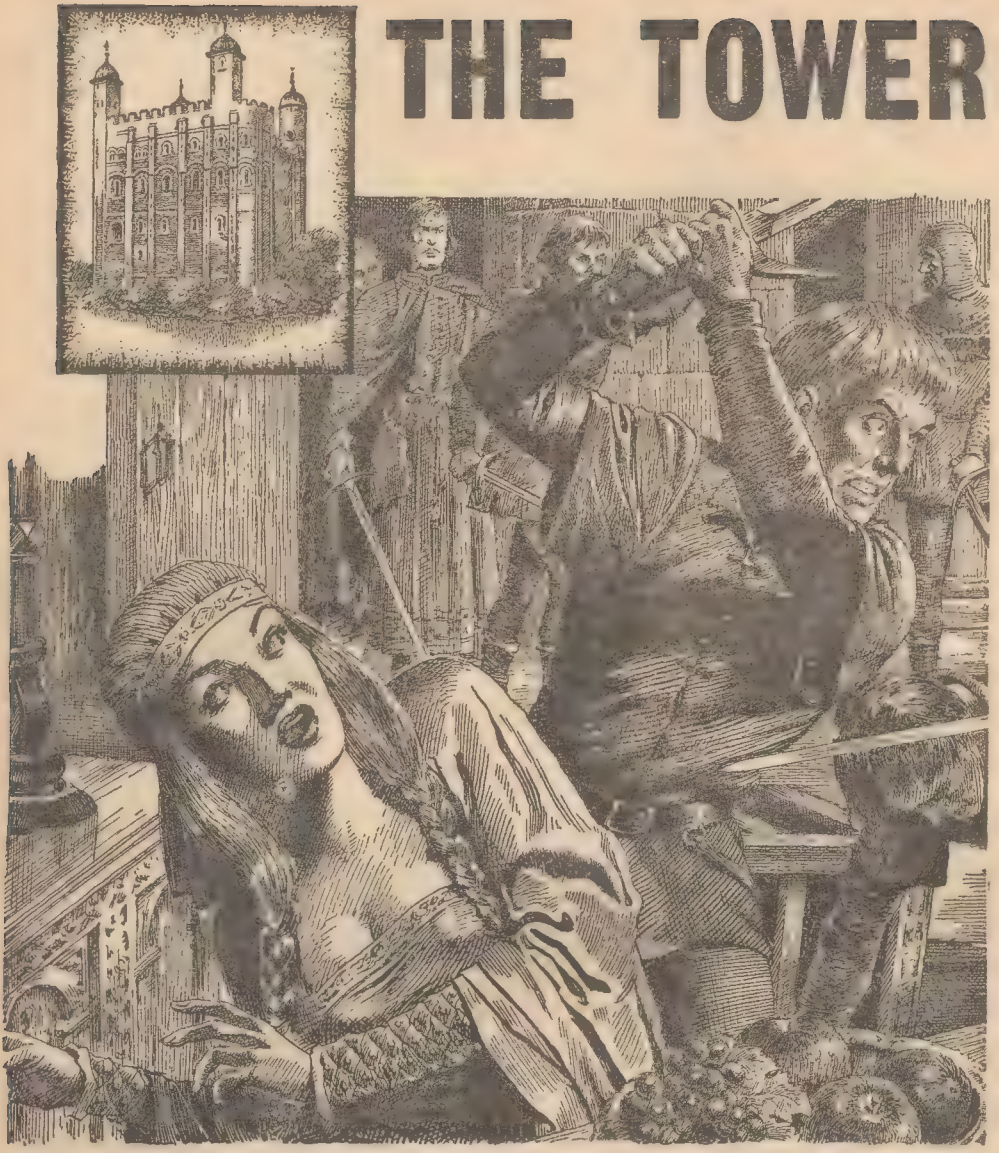
"Hawaii police are contacted by radiophone. I am to go aboard and question. So I wait ten days for *Dolphin* to arrive. But in same ten days San Francisco police find out other things. They search Pond's room and find unmailed letter. Letter is addressed to John Halliday in Vasaii. Pond maybe waits for next mail boat to mail it. Letter asks for five hundred dollars. If money comes, Pond will keep mouth shut. So police cable French police at Tahiti to find out why murder victim blackmails Halliday of Vasaii."

That was all Carr needed to be told. The French police had of course found that Halliday had a three thousand mile alibi for Pond's murder. But in the routine process of questioning him they would take his description and fingerprints. These, relayed to San Francisco, would establish Halliday as Shawn. And Shawn himself would be told he was no longer wanted. Which would send him hotfoot back to Myra. In fact his first elated cable to Myra would bring to light the fraud of pearls.

"All this," Kanala purred on smoothly, "is discovered during ten days I wait *Dolphin* to arrive Honolulu. Information from Shawn also prove larceny by Carr of ten pearls. This gives Carr possible motive to kill blackmailing steward. So we change plan. San Francisco, Honolulu and Tahiti police make a team to

(Continued on page 130)

THE TOWER



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KETCHUM

THE last of the work was finished. For a week, now, the laborers who had been brought out from London town had been carting away what was left of the white stone which had been brought from Caen and had been cleaning up the courtyard within the old Roman fortifications. Today or tomorrow the king would arrive and there would be a great celebration, perhaps

OF LONDON

A woman screamed and tried to get out of Brian's way as he started for Sir Walter.

even a tournament for among the followers of William of Normandy were men-at-arms who still had not had their fill of battle.

Brian Dacre stood on the flat roof of the great keep. He was thinking that there had never been another fortress quite like this one, so well built, so ideally situated. Whether future enemies should come by land or by sea, this fortress would stand in the way of their conquest of London. And the taking of it would be no idle task. Its walls were of solid masonry, fifteen feet thick at the base, almost eleven feet thick here at the top.

Gundolph of Bec joined him. Gundolph was wearing his usual dour expression. Brian had a notion the man never smiled.

"Well, 'tis finished, lad," Gundolph nodded.

"And you've done a good job, sir," said Brian. "The king has no finer keep in all of England."

"Perhaps not, but he will not be satisfied. And as for the job, most of the credit should be yours. Without the workmen from London town and you to handle them we could have built nothing more than a wall."

A flush of pleasure came to Brian's face. It was not true that the credit should be his, for the plans and method of building had come from Gundolph's wide experience. Yet he had had a part in the actual work. He had seen this great keep grow under his hands from its wide foundation stones to its four turrets.

"It will stand a long time," he said under his breath.

"For centuries," Gundolph nodded.

Brian stared into the sky. He tried to look ahead, down the years. Surely, he thought, this great keep would become the center of the life of England. Here the king would hold his court, and the king who followed William of Normandy and the king who followed him. Here the future rulers of England would be born and reared. Perhaps five hundred years from today, perhaps even a thousand years hence, England's king would stand where he was now standing, safe within these walls he had helped build.

"Yes, it will stand for centuries," Gundolph muttered. "There will be days when men will thank God on bended knee for this fortress we have built. There will be days when men will curse it. It will know both good and evil. Its halls will echo the sound of laughter and will muffle the groans of the dying."

Brian, unaccountably, felt a shiver run up and down his back. He stared curiously at the older man. Gundolph, he knew, was a churchman as well as a builder. Not long ago he had been named Bishop of Rochester. And of late the utterances of a churchman had been frequent upon his lips. Once before he had spoken along this same line, almost as though he regretted this great fortress he had built.

"What would you say this represents, lad?" he was asking now. "Strength? Power?"

Brian nodded. There was strength in every thickness of the wall. There was power to the man who held this keep.

"Yes, strength and power," Gundolph nodded. "And strength and power can be used for evil as well as good. I have not slept well of late."

The sudden, clear notes of a bugle reached through the air. Brian turned swiftly and stared toward the forest. Far away along the road which ran at its edge he could make out a company of mounted men. Sunlight glistened from their armor and from the points of their bannered spears. Brian's breath started coming faster. "The king," he said huskily. "'Tis the king."

An expression almost approaching a smile crossed Gundolph's face. "Yes, 'tis the king. And since you are to be presented to him today, Brian, perhaps you had best trim your hair and put on your finest cloak. When you return, if the king's guards stop you at the gate, ask for me."

BRIAN lived in a woodsman's cottage at the edge of the forest. Who it belonged to he didn't know. His father had been a serf to Sir Walter Layburn, a Saxon knight, who had supported the cause of King Harold. After Harold had been killed at Senlac Hill and William of Normandy had brought all of England under his power, the estates of Sir Walter Layburn had been confiscated.

With a good many others, Brian had fled to London town, and from there had been forced into the battalions of laborers required to build the great keep. What had signaled him out for Gundolph's special attention, Brian didn't know, but after only a few months on the job, Gundolph had started assigning him special work and soon had elevated him to a position of some authority. It had been at Gundolph's suggestion that he had moved to the deserted cottage, close to the keep.

As he trimmed his hair and laid out clean clothing, Brian tried to stifle the excitement he was feeling. He told himself to expect nothing from his meeting

with the king. He argued that the king's interest in a workman, even one thought worthy of special mention by Gundolph, could mean nothing. But in spite of all that his hopes were high. The king would surely like this fortress they had built and in the ranks of his followers there would surely be a place for a young man of strength and courage.

Brian straightened up and flexed his arms. He was a tall young man, broad of shoulder, well muscled. His hair had the light color of Danish ancestry. He could handle sword and spear, or for that matter, a bow and arrow. Often of an evening he had practiced at games of arms with men from the town.

The sound of a footstep in the doorway of the cottage brought Brian quickly around. A tall, gaunt faced fellow he had never before seen was standing there. A knife was belted at the man's waist. His hand was on it.

"Brian Dacre?" asked the man, "Serf to Sir Walter Layburn?"

Brian shook his head. "Serf no more, but a free man under William of Normandy."

A short laugh rattled in the fellow's throat. "That is a matter about which we could argue but it is of no importance now. Sir Walter is not far from here. He has sent for you."

As the man was speaking, two other men moved past him into the cottage. They were rough looking fellows, bearded, middle-aged. One wore a leather jerkin into which rings of steel had been sewn. The other had rusted, armored shoulder plates. Both carried drawn swords.

"You will be wise to come with us, Brian Dacre," said one of them. "Sir Walter is a man of short patience."

A cold perspiration oozed from the pores of Brian's skin. He could feel the chill of it on his body. His glance turned desperately from side to side. His sword was here but was beyond his reach. A loud shout, he knew, might bring armed men from the keep, but they would never get here in time.

"What does Sir Walter want?" he heard a voice asking, a shaky voice which must have been his own.

"That he will tell you himself," said the man in the chain armor. "And he doesn't like to wait."

Brian took a step backwards, then another. He whirled and grasped swiftly at his sword but the three men were upon him before he could turn around. The flat of a blade slapped him in the side of the head and Brian could feel the warm gush of blood from the wound. His eyes wouldn't focus. He jabbed out viciously with his sword and heard one of the men scream in pain.

"Alive! Alive!" someone was shouting. "Take him alive!"

Brian slashed from side to side with his sword but there was no strength left in his arm and his knees wouldn't hold him up. He knew, suddenly, that he had fallen to the floor and that the men were bending over him. He fought futilely against the bonds with which they were tying him.

"Bind up his head," ordered a voice. "Then get him to his feet. We haven't far to go. He can make it."

WHEN Brian was able to walk the three men prodded him along a path which led into the depths of the forest. Soon others joined them and presently they were in a clearing where there were perhaps fifty armed men. They were a dirty, ragged lot, slovenly in appearance. At a glance, Brian marked them for brigands, rebels against the rule of William of Normandy, or for that matter against any rule. There had been such bands as this even in the days of King Harold. There would always be such groups.

In the shade of a spreading tree to one side of the clearing were half a dozen men, better armored than the others and it was in this direction that Brian's captors led him. A sudden thrust as he neared the group drove Brian to his knees.

"Here he is, sire," said a voice. "Brian Dacre."

A tall, thin man with a ragged, black beard and blood-shot eyes stepped forward and at first Brian couldn't recognize him as Sir Walter Layburn. The years since the battle of Senlac Hill had laid a heavy hand on Sir Walter. His hair had thinned, the skin of his face had be-

come dry and wrinkled. But the tight, cruel lips were still the same.

"Men tell me you have forgotten your lord, Brian," said Sir Walter.

Brian struggled to his feet, a sudden, hot anger sweeping over him. This man was no lord of his. This man was responsible for his father's death, for the poverty which had killed his mother. Why he was not even a lord any more. He was only the member of a band of brigands.

"You have been serving the enemy who has overrun our country," Sir Walter continued. "It lies within my power to take your life, yet I have always been a fair man and would be one even now. I will give you a chance to prove that what I have heard is wrong."

Sharp, angry words tore at Brian's throat but he held them back. Sir Walter, he knew, meant what he said. There had always been a cruel streak in the man's nature.

"Do you understand me, Brian?" asked Sir Walter.

Brian made no answer. He stared straight into the older man's blood-shot eyes.

"You have been working on the keep just outside of London town," Sir Walter went on. "You have been a confident of the man who calls himself the Bishop of Rochester, Gundolph of Bec. It has come to me on good authority that you know a secret entrance to the great keep. Show us the way to that entrance and I will forget your disloyalty."

Brian caught his breath. It was true there was a secret entrance to the keep. He had thought none knew of it but him and Gundolph. They had built it together, working at night and by torchlight, carefully cleaning away each morning every evidence of what they had been doing. The plans Gundolph had drawn showed no record of the work. None save the king was to be told of the hidden passage. They had been careful. It wasn't possible that Sir Walter should know of it, yet he did.

"Well, Brian?" Sir Walter was asking.

Brian's lips framed a lie. "There is no secret entrance to the keep. Its walls are solid."

With no warning at all, one of the men behind him cuffed him on the side of the head. The blow sent Brian to his knees. Hands grasped at him and rolled him to his back. A sword in the hands of Sir Walter pricked his throat.

"You must learn to speak truthfully," Sir Walter was saying. "One night a workman fell asleep in the keep. He was wakened toward morning by the sound of voices. He overheard you and Gundolph talking of the secret entrance. I must know where it is."

Brian moistened his lips. He could understand why Sir Walter wanted to know of the secret entrance. Sir Walter was one of the Saxon lords who had never recognized William of Normandy. In his bitterness he had allied himself with men such as these here. He hated the king. If Brian disclosed the secret entrance to the keep what would happen was perfectly clear. After the banqueting tonight and when the men of the king's court were befogged with wine, Sir Walter and his band of murderers would enter the keep and the white stones of Caen would run red with Norman blood.

"Sire, let me make him talk," suggested a man Brian couldn't see.

Sir Walter frowned, then shook his head. He said, "Brian, why do you serve the Norman? He is not of your blood. He is not a man of England."

"But he has united all of England," Brian answered. "In the days of Harold and always before, we never stood as one people. Each lord was his own king. We fought among ourselves."

"A lie," Sir Walter growled.

Brian made no answer. He knew what he had said was not a lie. Gundolph had been the first to point out to him what William of Normandy had accomplished but what others had said had substantiated it. Since the battle of Senlac Hill, the king had brought all of England under his rule and had extended his power to the highlands of the Scots. No more were there battles and wars between rival lords. Other keeps such as this one he had helped to build were being constructed near each important town. Never again could an enemy overrun the country. In the unity which William of Normandy had demanded, there was national strength.

"It is a lie," said Sir Walter again. "William of Normandy is a rascal. He is long overdue in hell. Where is the secret entrance to the keep? We would entertain him tonight."

Brian shook his head. He saw a flush of anger come into Sir Walter's eyes. The man stepped forward and kicked him viciously in the side.

"Where is the secret entrance?"

Again Brian shook his head. He rolled swiftly away from another kick which was aimed at him and tried to jerk to his feet. Some man shoved him back to the ground. He tried to get up again but Sir Walter was standing over him and suddenly the man's foot came up and caught him under the jaw. Stars danced in front of Brian's eyes and then went out and for a long time he knew no more.

IT WAS dark when Brian awoke and a chill wind was blowing through the forest. For a minute he didn't know where he was, then all that had happened came back to him and he sat up and stared from side to side. There was enough light from the moon and stars to see that the clearing was deserted, that the brigands had gone.

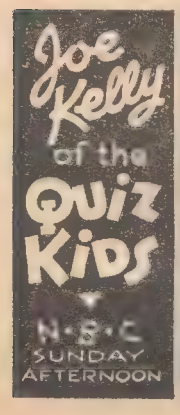
Brian was a little surprised that he was still living. He couldn't imagine that it was through any kindness on the part of Sir Walter. Perhaps, he decided, the brigands had thought him dead, or at least so weak that he would be an easy prey to the wild beasts of the forest. There could be no other explanation.

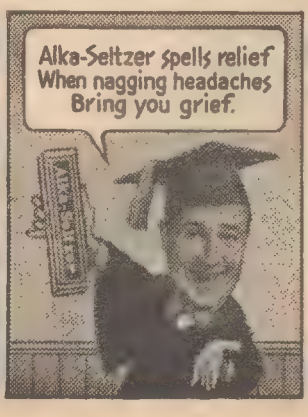
A shiver ran over his body. Brian drew his cloak tighter around him. He lifted a hand and explored the wound on the side of his head. The bandage which had been tied there was stuck fast by dried blood. His head throbbed painfully. There was another sore spot under his jaw.

After a while he got to his feet and moved to a nearby tree against which he leaned. His legs were unsteady and walking made him a little dizzy. He looked up at the stars again and by them, marked his course to London town and to the keep. He would be too late tonight for the celebration. But tomorrow would do as well.

It was later than he thought. Before Brian had gone very far the sky began to get light and as he neared his cottage the first rays of the sun stretched out from the east and touched the white walls of the great keep. As he caught his first sight of it, Brian came to a stop. He straightened up, a sudden smile erasing the tired look on his face. From here, on a hundred other mornings he had gazed at the keep but never had it seemed more beautiful in an early sun. William of Normandy's standards fluttered from its turrets and men could be seen on its walls.

Brian moved on to the door to his cottage and there came to another abrupt stop. The men on the roof of the keep were hauling down the king's standards and were running up another, a red banner with a blue border. Brian stiffened. He knew those colors and the design on them. He had served under that banner at Senlac Hill, had slaved under it in his youth. The banner of Sir Walter Layburn!





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Brian rubbed a hand across his eyes, sure that they were playing him false, but when he looked again it was still the red and blue standard of Sir Walter Layburn that he saw. It didn't make sense.

It didn't make sense unless—unless Sir Walter had succeeded in his plan to raid the keep.

Though it was still quite early, a crowd of men had already come out from London town and were standing at a respectful distance from the keep, looking that way curiously. Brian washed his face and hands in a stream which ran near his cottage. He got something to eat, then instead of heading for the keep, he angled over toward the crowd which had come out from the town.

Several men hailed him and then gathered around him, demanding word of what had happened in the keep the night before.

Brian shook his head. "I know nothing about what happened in the keep. Is the king—"

"But your wound," interrupted one of the men. "We thought surely you were in the battle and had escaped."

"What battle?" Brian demanded.

"I heard it this way," said a tall, thin fellow who had worked on the building of the keep. "In the middle of the night and when the men of the king's court were numbed by wine, a band of soldiers led by Sir Walter Layburn appeared suddenly within the walls. How they got there none seem to know and the battle could not have been much. Those who lived, when it was over, were thrown into the dungeons by Sir Walter."

"The king?"

"So it is said. Sir Walter is holding him for ransom to be paid by his brother in Normandy."

Brian stared toward the keep. It was no mystery to him how Sir Walter's men had gained entrance. In some way or other, Sir Walter had learned the location of the secret entrance.

"He will never let the king be ransomed," someone muttered. "Sir Walter plans to summon a meeting of the Witan to choose a new king from among the Saxons, preferably himself. He has already sent word to London town, demanding that we raise an army to support his cause, and that we put up the gold to pay for it."

Brian was still looking toward the keep. He was remembering what Gundolph had said, that strength and power could be used for evil as well as good. And here was evil. Evil in the type of man who had seized power and would use it for his own gain.

"What of Gundolph?" he asked suddenly.

No one had any answer for him. The fate of Gundolph was not yet a matter of common knowledge.

Guy Lockridge touched him on the shoulder and asked, low-voiced, "What will you do, Brian? Stay here and be forced into Sir Walter's army?"

Brian shook his head. "Never, Guy. I was once his serf. I know too well what service under Sir Walter would be."

"And I, too, through what I have heard of him," Lockridge muttered.

Brian glanced at this young man who stood beside him. He had known Guy Lockridge for several years. There was a streak of independence in him, and of recklessness which had always appealed to him. And beneath, ran a clear sense of loyalty. There were others like him who had worked on the keep, too. Thomas Drake, Hugh Butler, John Cook, Robin Squires. A dozen names came easily to his mind.

"Guy," he said suddenly, "could you come to my cottage tonight? Could you come at an hour after midnight? And come armed?"

Lockridge's eyes narrowed. "To what purpose?"

"Come and find out."

The man nodded. "And silently, I suppose."

"Without breathing a word of the meeting to a soul."

"There will be others?"

"Perhaps."

Guy Lockridge nodded. "I'll be there, Brian."

A party of armored men left the gate in the old Roman wall behind which the keep had been built. They headed toward the crowd which had come out from town and the crowd split up and hurried away, anxious to avoid any trouble.

Brian moved off with the rest. There were a number of men he wanted to see and he had only this day to reach them.

THE MOON was high and it was a bright, star-lit night with scarcely a cloud in the sky. The men Brian had seen started assembling at his cottage shortly after midnight. Fifteen they numbered when all were there, and each man had come well armed. For the most part, they were young men of about Brian's age. Quite a few were like him, of Norse descent, and had served as slaves or serfs under the reign of the king whom William of Normandy had vanquished at Senlac Hill.

Brian met with them outside his cottage but hidden by the cottage from the keep. He had told none of them what he had in mind and the fact that they had come without questioning him, he held as a rare tribute. And for a moment this feeling held him silent before them.

"What is it, Brian?" Guy Lockridge asked quietly. "I think we can follow you with our swords as well as we did with mortar and stone. Tell us why you called us here."

Brian shook his head. "Suppose I tell you first how it happened that Sir Walter Layburn could surprise William of Normandy and take him prisoner. By night, for more than a year now, Gundolph and I have been constructing a secret entrance to the keep. Sir Walter learned of it and led his men into the keep through the hidden passage."

"Learned of it, how, Brian?"

"How I cannot tell you, but yesterday morning three of Sir Walter's men took me prisoner and carried me into the forest to where Sir Walter was waiting. He demanded of me the secret. I didn't tell him. But from some other man, some workman who might have stumbled on the secret passage, he must have learned the way. In no other manner could he have entered the keep so easily."

"So that's it," breathed Hugh Butler. "I had heard rumor of a secret entrance but thought it only rumor."

Brian pushed his fingers through his hair. He looked from one to another of the men facing him. They were waiting silently for him to go on, though already, some of them must have guessed what he had in mind.

"When we started building this keep, years ago," he said slowly, "many of us knew little of William of Normandy. Most of us, probably, had fought against him at Senlac Hill. Some of us, without doubt, still hated him, and came to work here only for the food to be earned. Since those days, however, we have had a chance to see what kind of a king he was. For the first time within the knowledge of men, all of England is unified. His laws have not been harsh nor have his taxes been too heavy. He has been a good king. We know, too, something of Sir Walter Layburn, or a few of us do. The Witan might not name Sir Walter king but who among the Saxon knights is stronger? How would we choose if it were left up to us—Sir Walter or William of Normandy?"

John Cook shook his head. "But 'tis not left up to us, Brian. The choice has been made."

"No, it hasn't," said Brian quickly. "I told you of the passage into the keep. Where Sir Walter went last night, we could go in another hour. The choice is ours."

For a moment there wasn't a sound from the men facing him. Brian could sense the tension which had gripped them. They were leaning forward, watching him closely. They were breathing faster.

"Sixteen of us, Brian?" asked John Cook, his voice showing the strain. "Sixteen again how many?"

"Sixteen against perhaps fifty. Fifty who had no sleep last night and who have probably been drinking all day in celebration of their victory."

"But still sixteen against fifty."

Brian shrugged his shoulders. He made no answer. He felt suddenly very tired.

"You are going, Brian?" asked Guy Lockridge.

"Yes."

"And I. That makes two."

"Three," said Robin Squires quietly.

"Four," said John Cook. "Did you think I was afraid to die, Brian?"

Almost together the rest of the men stepped forward and suddenly the ten-

sion was gone and the men facing Brian were grinning and joking with one another and Brian forgot that a moment before he had been feeling tired.

"Where is this secret entrance, Brian?" asked Guy Lockridge.

"We make our way to the Thames," Brian answered. "I will show you."

As he spoke he drew his sword and tried the feel of it. He had borrowed this sword, today. It was a little heavier than the one he had owned but the edge was good and he liked the extra weight.

"The passage is long," he continued. "It leads underground from near the Thames to the wall of the keep and up a narrow stairway in the wall to the second floor. Stay close behind me and make no sound."

DEEP in the passage and at the stairway leading up through the wall, Brian paused, remembering abruptly the odds they faced. He had only a handful of men with him and it was only a guess that Sir Walter's men numbered fifty. Since yesterday, fifty more might have joined Sir Walter. Or even a hundred. A heavy guard might await them at the top of the stairs or the passage into the keep might even be blocked.

Brian sucked in a long, slow breath. He stared up through the darkness. He and Gundolph had built this passageway. It was through it that Sir Walter had gained entrance to the keep and it was his, Brian's responsibility, to try and undo the damage this passageway had caused. But it was not the responsibility of these men who were following him.

"Wait here," he whispered to Guy Lockridge who stood just behind him. "I will see how it is above."

Lockridge chuckled. "Wait here? Why, Brian? I never liked the dark. Let's go upstairs where there is torch-light and where a man can see to use a sword."

Brian bit his lips. He still hesitated.

"We all chose to come, Brian," Lockridge reminded him.

A heavy weight seemed to fall from Brian's shoulders. He could see now that he hadn't been thinking straight. He had looked on this as a responsibility but these with him were here by their right of choice as free men, their right to fight and die for a cause in which they believed.

Brian nodded his head and started up the narrow stairway. At the top he drew his sword, then slowly pressed on the stone which opened the hidden doorway into the keep. It gave and the doorway started opening. It hadn't been blocked. Later, Sir Walter might have had it mortered tight but he hadn't yet had time.

The torches in the wall brackets within the keep were still burning and as Brian stepped into the room he saw two guards at the near circular staircase which led to the floor above. In the deep shadows across the room, men were sleeping. He could see their recumbent figures. From above came sounds of laughter and song. Above was the banquet hall. Sir Walter's celebration was still going on.

A cry of alarm arose from the throat of one of the guards and Brian raced toward him. The man jabbed out with his spear but Brian's sword turned it aside, then slashed down at the man's head. Lockridge, pounding after him, engaged the other guard. A shout which was half scream broke from the guard's lips. It ended suddenly as he sprawled to the floor.

Across the room, the men who had been sleeping were coming to their feet and clutching for their weapons. But most of them were not quick enough. Brian's men, pouring into the room, were at them savagely, whittling down the odds while they could.

Guy Lockridge disposed of the second guard and turned to face Brian. There was a reckless light dancing in his eyes. "Which way?" he demanded.

"Down the stairway, Guy," Brian answered. And then lifting his voice, "Half of you follow Guy Lockridge. Get to the dungeons and release the king and the men held prisoner. The rest follow me."

Brian's men had made quick work of disposing of the opposition on this floor. Already several of them were pounding down the stairway after Guy Lockridge. Brian started for the floor above. Half way up he met a fellow coming down, someone alarmed by the sounds of battle. Brian's sword cut at the man's legs

and his high, shrill scream as he fell silenced those in the room above.

Clambering over the man's body, Brian ran up the rest of the steps. He had no memory of how he fought his way into that banquet hall but suddenly he was there and John Cook with him and Robin Squires and four others, and the men who had tried to stop them were falling back and some were down.

BRIAN had a confused impression of the great hall, of a table still loaded with food and of men and women around it, of smoking torches in the wall brackets and of Sir Walter Layburn at the table's head, a startled, pale-faced Sir Walter Layburn, getting to his feet. He must have seen more. He must have seen the men who stood between him and Sir Walter and who tried to cut him down as he pressed forward, but they made little impression on him.

He reached the table, ducked the slashing cut of a sword and placing a hand on the table vaulted to the other side. A woman in a red and silver gown screamed and tried to get out of his way as he started for Sir Walter. She tripped him and Brian went to his knees. He was up again, almost at once, and his sword was crossed with Sir Walter's.

"The serf has become a man, Sir Walter," he heard himself shouting. "But he has not forgotten the man responsible for his father's death and for the death of his mother. He has not forgotten yesterday in the forest."

There was strength in Sir Walter's arm and cunning in his use of the sword. Blow after blow he warded off, stepping ever backwards and around the table. And then there were suddenly men on each side of him and Brian felt the cut of a sword in his thigh and the prick of another on his arm. His breath was coming harder now and the sword seemed heavier, much heavier than it had at first. Perspiration showed on Sir Walter's thin, bony face, but his eyes were no longer afraid.

Beyond the man Brian caught a glimpse of John Cook. Cook was in the same fix as he. Three men had separated him from the others and even in that glance Brian saw Cook go down, blood gushing from a cut in his head.

It was the sight of that and the knowledge of what lay ahead for him that brought him a sudden new strength. How things went below he couldn't know. Perhaps all was lost, yet even so he could win a partial victory if he could only get to Sir Walter. It was with this thought in mind that he grasped his sword in both hands and lunged forward. Pain stabbed through his side, half stopping him, but his sword was even then slashing down. It broke through the quick guard of Sir Walter and cut deep into his neck at the shoulder. Sir Walter twisted under the cut but was dead even before he hit the floor.

Then quite abruptly men Brian had never seen before were fighting at his side and as he sank to his knees a roaring voice demanded that Sir Walter's men cast down their weapons. Brian looked toward the doorway. There, a bloody sword clasped in one hand, with hair and beard awry, clad in soiled clothing, stood William of Normandy, a stern, angry look in his face. And near him, laughing and bright-eyed from the battle, was Guy Lockridge.

It was over, then. The sixteen had done it. Brian tried to twist his lips into a grin. He tried to get to his feet but the floor seemed to come up and hit him in the face.

Two weeks had passed and the king was still at the great keep. There had been a great tournament and every night a banquet and knights from all over England had come here to court.

Brian Dacre, of course, hadn't seen much of this. The wound in his side had kept him flat on his back. It was perhaps a wonder that he had lived at all, though actually, William of Normandy's private doctor took credit for saving him.

Today, for the first time, he had been brought to the roof of the keep and just as on the morning of the king's arrival, Gundolph was with him.

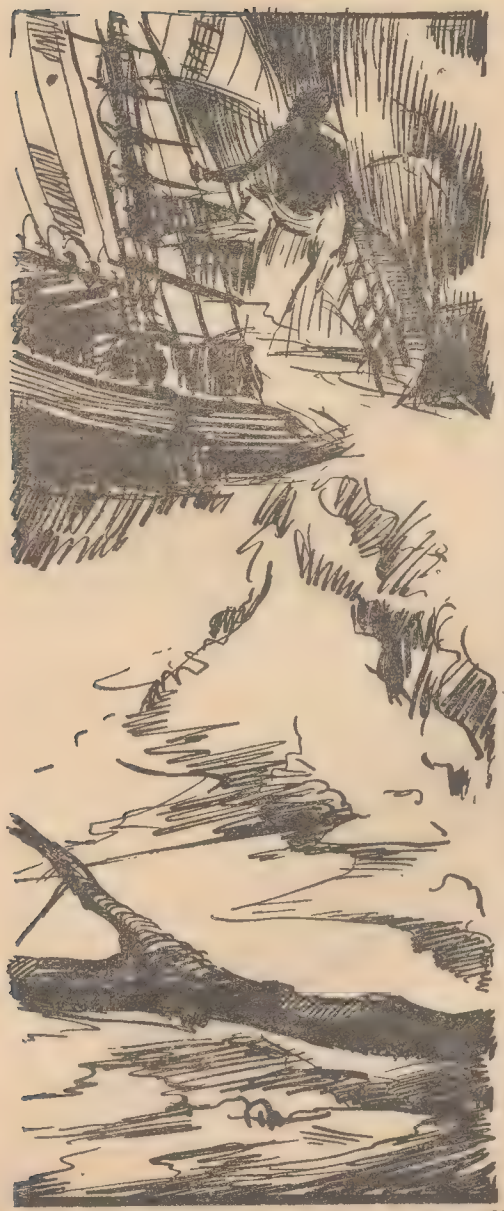
"So they walled up the secret passage," Brian said slowly. "We should never have built it, Gundolph."

Gundolph shrugged his shoulders. "There are still gates and doors and men

(Continued on page 129)

When he sighted Windmill Point, McCargo twirled the helm and the Minong heeled over like a tickled lass.

Captain McCargo's Pink Elephant



By
WILLIAM
RATIGAN

HIST'RY is cockeyed," remarked Captain Uncle Ben Sparhawk in his Downeaster twang. For punctuation he scored a ringing bull's-eye on a remote cuspidor, and his truculent iron-gray brows challenged anybody in the Steamboat Hotel to question his statement.

"Columbus was a mangy Portygee who couldn't chart a course down the Erie Canal. He didn't know a compass from a capstan, and today he'd be lucky to sign aboard a mud scow as a deck hand. Imagine setting out for India and bumping into God's country by mistake. Hell, he'd have been fired off the lake run so fast his head would still be swimming.

"Take this right-here town of Daytroit. It got set up in business because some royal geezer over in Europe took a fancy to beaver hats—not because of high-toned gibberish handed out by schoolmarms. And every one of these Great Lakes was discovered thanks to trifling no-accounts who figured China must be around the next bend in the bay.

"Except for one error in judgment, this whole continent might belong to the French. The Frogeaters used expensive imported brandy to trade with the redskins and us Yankees outsmarted 'em by making cheap rum from molasses and hogging the works.

ILLUSTRATED BY
CHARLES GEER

"That's how cockeyed hist'ry can be. Beaver hats and homebrew deserve more credit for the birth of this nation than George Washington and Betsy Ross. And, what's more, the United States might be more than twice as big as it is now if it hadn't been for a pink elephant that got drunker'n seven hoot owls. . ."

With that introduction, Captain Sparhawk went oiled down the ways and launched another of his stories about McCargo.

We'll have to soften the shock of the old gent's vocabulary and dainty the details a bit, but we'll steer the course he charted.

THE APRIL sun was a warm coat on his back and a money-musk breeze from Lake St. Clair sang through the shrouds as Captain Thunder Bay McCargo sighted Windmill Point on the Detroit River. He twirled the helm and the *Minong* heeled over like a tickled lass, laughing in the water. With red iron ore from the Marquette Range on her decks and barrels of Soo whitefish crowding the baled Mackinac pelts in her belly, the schooner sped down the Straits toward a brawling meeting-pot of a town founded by Sieur Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac.

On both the Canadian and the American side of the river, excited sunbonnets and billowing petticoats came breathless to the banks. The first robin redbreast of spring played second fiddle to the white bosomed *Minong*, for here sailed a flying cloud of proof that the Upper Lakes had broken their icy chains and that the greatest of all inland waterways lay open to navigation.

"Green grow the rushes, oh!
Kiss her quick and let her go!
But don't you tear her ruffle, oh!"

The sunbonnets ashore waved and cupped their ears to tunes that set their toes a-tingle as the mermaid on the *Minong's* bow danced and dipped in a Virginia Reel to harbor.

"Oh, I jumped in the seat
And I gave a little yell.
The horses ran away,
Broke the wagon all to hell.
Sugar in the gourd
And honey in the horn,
I never was so happy
Since the hour I was born."

The *Minong's* quartet, with Hulda's deep bell of a voice, had rounded into shape during the winter, and McCargo had no cares in the world—none, that is, worth mentioning. As mistress of the galley, the Norsky wench had shown herself queen of cooks by making even boiled lutefisk taste like crepes suzettes, but she still nursed McCargo's son as her own and insisted on calling the yearling Olaf.

To complicate matters, he had greeted her from the start with his only Scandihoovian phrase—*Jag elskar dig*—which he had understood to be the Norsky way of saying howdydo. On one occasion he had entered the cabin just after she had finished giving suck to the baby, and greeted her as usual. She had responded unexpectedly, and with passion. It was rather late in the season when a hard-rock miner from Ishpeming told him that *Jag elskar dig* meant *I love you.*

But there were no real worries on McCargo's mind. How could there be? His quartet sailed the lakes again while Cormac, king of Irish wolfhounds, beat time with his tail, thumping the deck below where Red Massasauga's *tickenagun* swung from the rigging, with Olaf poking a beamish face from the wampumed and porcupine-quilled nest of the Indian cradle, flanked by a washload of Keewenaw diapers hung out to dry by Black Pompey.

So, as the *Minong* curtsied to Belle Isle, McCargo surrendered the helm to the taurine Negro, stripped off his sea-going togs, and lowered himself over the fantail on a dragline into the ice-cold shock of the water. He splashed and frolicked in the wake, washing himself clean of the red ore dust and trying to keep his baritone in key with the song-fest. Then he climbed aboard and stood dripping on the deck, mother-naked—a long-shanked, wasp-waisted devil with walking beams for shoulders and peeled logs for arms.

A picnic party of pleasant baggages

giggled by in a *canot du maître* and he ducked below to reappear a few minutes later dressed to the gills in a fawn-colored beaver with a bell-shaped crown, a stock and waistcoat to shame rainbows, a snuff-brown cutaway, and skin-tight shamrock trousers above Wellington boots. After one look at Detroit's harbor line, he went back to his cabin and came up with a brace of .44 caliber Colt Derringers. The scabbard in one boot held a Bowie knife; the other contained a hara-kiri dagger with a jewelled handle. McCargo, a cautious man, had spotted Captain Sparhawk's side-wheeler, the *Prairie Dew*, and was prepared for the worst.

As the *Minong* warped alongside the Wayne Street dock, every boat in the harbor and sawmill on the bluff let off steam. The sweet clang of church bells sounded with the blast of whistles and the crowded wharfs were an explosion of cheers and firecrackers.

A delegation of leading citizens presented McCargo with a gold-knobbed cane, his reward for bringing the first boat into port since Close of Navigation, five weary months ago.

Joseph Campau and Papa LeFevre saluted him on both cheeks and then the two old habitants stood back and beamed proudly on McCargo and their gift.

"Ah, *mon ami!*" cried Campau. "How we would be desolate if you have not win. We choose him because is *parfait* for you."

"Try him out," begged Papa LeFevre. "Pull ze handle and—*voila!*"

McCargo pulled. Three feet of flashing Toledo blade whistled from the walking stick. Reverently, he plunged the rapier back into the cane-sheath. While he stumbled over a speech of thanks, two apple-cheeked girls, pretty as sloops running before the wind, slipped from the crowd and ambushed him with kisses.

"You are invited to dinner," breathed Yvonne.

"You are ordered!" commanded Marie.

They darted away. Two years of marriage had not changed the LeFevre twins. Instead of young matrons, they acted like Normandy milkmaids on a cider spree.

"Mes enfants" shrugged Papa LeFevre. *"Mon Dieu,* what domestic calamities!" But his voice spoke of priceless heirlooms. *"Eh, bien, mon capitaine,* you will dine *chez moi, n'est-ce pas? C'est fini."*

The two old habitants saluted him again, and, as they did, whispered a word in his ear—a plea for help torn from their French-American souls.

McCargo bowed, and the gold ring jigged a hornpipe from his ear. "I'll be there," he promised Joseph Campau and Papa LeFevre.

THE CROWD lingered. Detroiters were accustomed by now to the sight of massive Black Pompey and towering Red Massasauga—the Negro in bright billow garments crowned with a scarlet turban as if he had just stepped from a Sultan's harem, the Indian with a trading blanket wrapped around his breechclout and bearclaw ornaments—but this was the town's first glimpse of Hulda Roen Slogvig, the Valkyrian Norsky who stood taller than most men in her black peasant shoon, and under whose flowered Hardanger corselet swelled such natural bounties that, as Sparhawk once remarked, she could breastfeed a regiment without shifting sides.

Detroit gawked at Hulda and Hulda stared somberly at Detroit. McCargo broke the deadlock by starting a song in his rollicking baritone: *"Oh, 'twas in the month of August or the middle of July—"*

Black Pompey's teeth flashed against an ebony background as he spliced his Savannah tenor to the tune: *"One evening I went walking, a fair maiden I did spy—"*

Hulda's contralto would have shivered wineglasses: *"She was mourning for her true love, who was in Amerikee—"*

Red Massasauga came in on the bass, low down and mellow as a harvest moon: *"Agh, divil a word I said to her, and she the same to me!"*

The crowd roared its applause and the baby in the tickenagun gurgled from the rigging as the *Minong's* quartet entertained the waterfront.

"I got a gal at the head of the holler
Plink-a-plink-plunk-tiddle-de-day!

She won't come and I won't foller
Plink-a-plink-plunk-tiddle-de-day!
Geese in the lake and ducks in the ocean
Plink-a-plink-plunk-tiddle-de-day!
Devil's in the women when they take a notion
Plink-a-plink-plunk-tiddle-de-day!"

Gradually, the broadcloth and homespun moved off the dock, on reluctant feet and with over-the-shoulder looks. The Negro and the Indian toted up whitefish and furs from the hold. Hulda changed the baby; Cormac dreamed about rabbits.

McCargo still had no worries. True, Sparhawk was in port, and two old habitants were deeply troubled about some approaching disaster, but everything would iron out because the *Minong* had a quartet to rival the time when the morning stars sang together. So McCargo hummed that last catchy chorus: *"Devil's in the women when they take a notion—plink-a-plink—"*

Plunk! Hulda's battered suitcase hit the deck. McCargo spun around. The Norsky had the Indian cradle strapped to her back, and a mule could have learned about stubbornness from the way she thrust out her lower lip and kept her arms akimbo.

"Life at sea hay ess no place for my Olaf," Hulda said. "Aye bane thank aye go shore and hunt up yob cooking."

It was mutiny! Red Massasauga and Black Pompey said nothing as they began to heave the iron ore to the dock, but a blind man could see they agreed with Hulda. Even Cormac wore a hangdog look.

McCargo pleaded, wheedled, coaxed, threatened, flattered, cursed, swore, and —talked to the wind. Hulda remained as unmoved as one of the Pictured Rocks during a Lake Superior squall. She waited until he ran out of breath, and picked up her suitcase.

"Aye ban thank we go now, my Olaf and me."

The master of the *Minong*, respected and feared from Isle Royale to the thundering gorge of Niagara, helplessly watched her trudge up the hill toward Jefferson Avenue, breaking up his quartet, walking away with his son.

On the deck, Cormac whined and strained at an imaginary leash.

McCargo called the Irish wolfhound to heel and raced after Hulda. By the time he topped the bluff, raging at the vanity that always made him buy boots a size too small, the Norsky was across Jefferson, and he had to dodge a cavalcade of two-wheeled Breton carts and lumbering Conestoga wagons to reach her.

With Beau Brummel manners, he asked her to wait on the corner, and barged into Papa LeFevre's office.

"I'm thinking," he said, "you need a cook and housekeeper."

Papa Le Fevre put aside his sputtering quill pen and gravely sanded a page of his account book. "That thought," he replied, "has just been of an occurrence to me." And his Gallic smile matched McCargo's Celtic grin.

So, with Hulda in tow, McCargo steamed up Woodward, and, at the intersection of Beaubien, was struck amidships by a human derelict and a menace to navigation.

CHAPTER II

A SOUL FOR SATAN

IT WAS old Captain Sparhawk, three sheets to the wind and charting an uncertain course. The Downeaster's stovepipe hat was stained with seagull guano, and the shirt ruffles under his Prince Albert were flecked with spray from Peerless Plug.

"Been hoping I'd bump into you, son," he said, staggering and clutching McCargo for support. "I just seen a pink elephant."

"You'll be hunting snakes in your hair next," said McCargo. "Go away and sleep it off."

With an air of wounded dignity, Sparhawk bit off a fresh chaw of tobacco, and lurched at anchor like a four-master in a driving gale. "It was a real live pink elephant." *Sp-urt!* "And drunker than seven fiddlers at a wake." *Sp-lash!*

"Come along, Hulda," said McCargo.

Sparhawk blocked the way. "Maybe this'll sober you up, son," he said. "Pierre Lafromboise—brother to him

that died for you on Mackinac last July —is in the calaboose, and, less'n we yank 'im out come sundown, there'll be a mob-lynching tonight."

McCargo's voice cracked like a bull-whip. "Who's behind it?"

"Your patriotic pal, Uriah Ginch, that hydrophoby skunk! Calls hisself General Ginch now, and he's got a ragtag and bobtail army camped out on the Monroe Trail. Dregs of the frontier and scum of the lakes, fair spoiling for a brawl. The hull passel o' varmints oughta be hanged." *Sp-urt!* "But there ain't enough trees in Michigan to go around." *Sp-lash!*

"I'll meet you at the Red Horse Tavern in an hour," McCargo said, and hustled Hulda up Beaubien Street as Sparhawk tacked away, muttering something about steering clear of pink elephants on the high seas.

Papa LeFevre's sprawling *château*, with the front door divided in the old style for neighborly gossiping across the top, was famous from the Great Genesee Turnpike to the Apostle Island. Its hospitality had embraced three presidents and Daniel Webster, but a royal host of guests were eclipsed by the glory of its orchard—the huge pear trees planted before George Washington's birth by the first LeFevre who sailed up the St. Lawrence, and now cracking into bud again this spring while Zachary Taylor pastured his horse on the White House lawn. These trees were old and very wise. They guarded the home, sheltered it with their boughs—and kept a watchful eye on the windows.

The twins burst from the house with a hop-skip-and-jump. They took Olaf and Hulda to their hearts. A baby to play with! No more dishes! No dusting, no cooking! Hoop-la! Chattering ninety to the minute, they showed the Norsky a room with a trundle bed for Olaf tucked under the canopied bed for herself.

But it was when Hulda saw the kitchen, with its half-ton of wrought-iron stove from Troy and endless rows of pots and skillets, that her eyes grew shiny, and she threw her mighty arms around McCargo, and cried *"Jag elskar dig!"*

The Hardanger corselet seemed to go right through his ribs. His face turned red. The twins looked green-eyed. Hulda rolled up her sleeves happily and went to work.

McCargo found himself led down a garden path past two venerable graybeards with shawled shoulders who were drowsing over a chess table. He was pushed into a swing and the twins plumped on his lap.

"Your husbands are watching," warned McCargo.

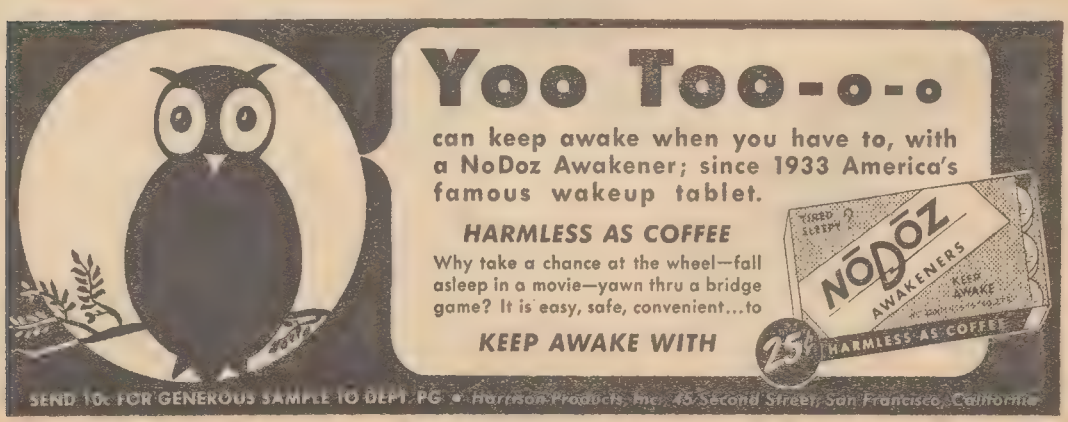
"They are half-blind and half-deaf, and nice and understanding," said Marie.

"As long as we don't interrupt their chess game," said Yvonne.

"We have already explained to them," said Marie, "that we want you to be the father of their sons."

"I see," said McCargo. "WHAT?"

The twins talked to him as if they were trying to drive home a simple lesson to a dull scholar. In France, these affairs were taken for granted. A rich old man knew what to expect when he married a young girl. He accepted without ques-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tion whatever children came along and was glad to get them, for the sake of carrying on his family name.

"Hulda!" yelled McCargo. "Hulda!"

THE graybeards looked up from their chess pieces and frowned. One of them shook his head in reproof; the other put a finger across his lips for silence. No Hulda came to McCargo's rescue.

"You are taking an unreasonable attitude," pouted Marie.

"Narrow-minded and provincial," added Yvonne. "Unless you agree to our terms we shall have to take stern measures."

Marie tumbled out their threat in a somersault of words. "We'll tell Hulda the truth—that her son was still-born and your wife died in childbirth and Uncle Ben Sparhawk put your baby in Hulda's bed because you were hunting a wetnurse and Olaf doesn't belong to her at all."

For one black instant, McCargo thought of daring the twins to go through with their threat. It would give him clear title to his own son and . . . "No," he said bleakly, "you can't do that. Hulda's husband is dead and the baby is all she has in the world. It would break her heart to tell her now . . . Who spilled the secret?"

The twins explained how, in meeting the *Minong* at the dock, they had noticed the orange fuzz that decked Olaf's head —a shocking orange, the very color of McCargo's unruly hair and long sideburns. On the way home, they had met Sparhawk, half-seas over, and teased the secret from him in between his babblings about a boiled pink elephant.

McCargo whistled up Cormac and tumbled the twins from his lap. Not a whit abashed and completely shameless, the two wild roses of Papa LeFevre followed him to the gate of the white picket fence.

"Dinner is at nine," cautioned Marie, wrinkling her pert nose.

"We will discuss this further," reminded Yvonne, demurely lowering her long lashes.

McCargo gulped, and headed for the Red Horse Tavern. Well, at least he had provided a good home for Hulda and his son—at whatever hazard to himself. Under his breath, he sang a forlorn ditty that came too close for comfort: *"Geese in the lake and ducks in the ocean— Devil's in the women when they take a notion!"*

He sashayed through the bat-wing doors of the Red Horse Tavern to hear Sparhawk bawl, "Promenade to the brass rail, me buckos. I'm fixin' to drown the whole state of Michigan in Oh-be-joyful afore my purse runs dry!"

McCargo collared the old reprobate, weaned him from the bottle by force, and dragged him into the street. He pushed his head into a horse trough three times, and Sparhawk came up spluttering and kiyoodling and spitting water. "Whatcha trying ta do—poison me?"

But he seemed to sober up until he said, "That pink elephant I saw staggering down Woodward wasn't drunk, son. He was only play-acting drunk. Follow me."

At McKinstry's Public Gardens, Sparhawk kicked and elbowed his way through a jam-pack crowd up to the center of excitement.

A spinsterish female in harsh crinoline and a sightly lass, good to look at from the poke bonnet topping her blue-black curls to the snowy pantalettes foaming from under a short skirt to trim ankles, stood on a wooden platform in front of a large tabernacle tent. Both platform and tent were splashed with screaming banners and broadsides: FREE THE BLACK SLAVES!! FREE THE WHITE HAND-MAIDENS!! FREE MAN FROM DEMON ALCOHOL!! WOMEN'S RIGHTS!!! TEMPERANCE!!!

Heartbreaking lithographs assaulted the eye: Simon Legree horsewhipping Uncle Tom—Brigham Young snoring in an enormous bed, dozens of sad-faced wives pillowed to right and left, and the room crowded with cradles—a golden-haired tot kneeling on the sawdust floor of a saloon imploring her drunken father to come home.

Handbills circulating through the crowd warned Detroit that Miss Samantha Fields and her maiden aunt, Miss Abigail K. Foster, delegates-at-large from the Seneca Falls Convention for Women's

Rights, would appear one more day only, due to pressing commitments in Cleveland where the crusade would continue.

On the table in front of Miss Abigail K. Potter were a virgin glass of water and a formidable document. She wet her lips delicately, picked up the document as if it were the Holy Grail, and, after some appropriate opening remarks, read the new Declaration of Independence to her audience.

"We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men *and women* are created equal . . ."

She went on from there, but McCargo listened with only half an ear. The pantalettes of Samantha Fields claimed most of his attention. She seemed to be on the platform purely for ornamental purposes, and he liked the ornaments.

"THE history of mankind," railed Miss Potter, "is a history of repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman, having in direct object the establishment of an absolute tyranny over her . . ."

Tyranny? The pantalettes of Miss Samantha Fields were tyrants. McCargo bowed in homage before them.

"Why aren't women allowed to vote?" demanded Miss Potter. "Why should we obey laws in whose formation we have had no voice? Why shouldn't a woman be allowed to run for Congress—yes, for President?"

Sparhawk poked McCargo in the ribs. "Cover up her face and she wouldn't be bad to lollygag, son." *Sp-urt!* "Her figger is fair to middlin', and shemales that age are so danged grateful." *Sp-lash!*

Miss Potter's crinolines rustled ominously as she pranced up and down the platform. She spoke of the poor Negro, but called on God to witness the degradation of her own sex. She traced the wrongs of womanhood to the root of all evil—strong spirits.

"Who hath woe?" asked Miss Potter. "Who hath sorrow? Who hath babblings? Who hath wounds without cause? They that tarry long at the wine!"

There was a stirring of sunbonnets in the audience. A drunken sob sounded near the platform, as a rum-soak went into a crying jag.

"And I believe, as surely as I stand here before you," harangued Miss Abigail Potter, "that the man who gives his body to be preserved in alcohol, gives his soul into the keeping of Satan in hell!"

Housewives shouted Amen! and surged closer to the platform.

Miss Potter pointed an eloquent finger. "But there is yet time to avert disaster. Inside our tent is an object lesson for all those whose dreams are tortured by green snakes on the ceiling and pink elephants on the walls. Step right this way—one dime, the tenth part of a dollar for admission!"

Eager spectators forked over their money and crowded into the tent, McCargo and Sparhawk vanguarding the rush. They stepped into delirium. A pink elephant was tottering around an improvised ring formed by tent pegs and a stout rope. He staggered and swayed, sideslipped and lurched, weaving and stumbling in an endless circle. The tip of his trunk brandished a whisky bottle which he raised now and then as if taking a long swallow. But it was when he started to hiccup that the rum-soak got down on his knees and vowed never to touch a drop again.

The crowd gaped and gasped as dainty Samantha and dour Abigail put Hannibal the pink elephant through his tipsy paces, and even McCargo felt his jaw bounce against his collarbone, but Sparhawk was an old hand at the game by now, this being his second look-see at the matinee performance.

"Hell," he said, "won't be long afore elephants are as common on the lakes as Shanty-Irish. I see by the *Free Press* that my old sidekick Barnum just shipped one to Cleveland.

"Your sidekick?" McCargo's tone indicated his lack of belief.

"We used to eat outa each other's pockets." *Sp-urt!* "I staked Phineas to his first midget." *Sp-lash!*

Abigail clapped her hands in the ring. Samantha went to a huge chest, took out a bottle and brought it to her maiden aunt. The spinster held it up so all could see the label. It was marked: *Anti-Alcohol-Sure-Cure.*

With practiced ease, Abigail drew the cork, hurled the whiskey bottle from the elephant's trunk, and inserted the other. The crowd heard the gurgle as Hannibal tilted it up, they saw the splash as he squirted the black liquid from his trunk into his mouth. They saw him stop reeling around the ring and become stone sober. They saw his table-size ears flop as he shook his head when Abigail offered him a bottle of whiskey.

"Now," whispered Sparhawk, "she gives the pitch."

And Miss Abigail K. Potter did just that. "For those in dire straits," she called, "and for those poor creatures who have menfolks at home in need of the cure, we have a limited supply of this magic elixir at one dollar the bottle. Step this way, please . . ."

The crowd rushed. Housewives came away from the huge chest with bottles in their aprons and bottles in their sunbonnets. A few sheepish men made furtive purchases.

"I tasted the stuff." *Sp-urt!* "They must make it outa river mud and January molasses." *Sp-lash!*

Abigail and Samantha passed among the crowd, distributing song sheets. "For those who care to join my niece in the Temperance Hymn," explained the spinster.

Arm in arm, the two women took their stations beside the elephant, and, from the moment Samantha opened her mouth, McCargo's heart was lost.

"King Alcohol is very sly
A liar from the first
He'll make you drink until you're dry
Then drink because you thirst . . ."

"Lookit Abigail move her lips and mumble," Sparhawk whispered. "Betcha she's praying that the next president will wear petticoats."

"Stow your gab!" McCargo growled. Hulda had broken up his quartet but here was the answer to his prayer. A soprano high and shimmery as the Northern Lights. He studied the songsheet and his baritone changed Samantha's solo to a duet.

"King Alcohol has had his day
His kingdom's crumbling fast
His votaries are heard to say
Our tumbling days are past
The shout of temperance ladies
Is heard on every gale
They're chanting now in victory
O'er whisky, gin, and ale!"

Samantha smiled her thanks, but Abigail cried, "On to the saloons!" Hannibal lifted a foreleg like a first-growth pine, and, with a vault and flash of pantalettes, Samantha was on his back. The crowd cheered and the parade streamed down Woodward, and a pink elephant flourished from his trunk a sign that read: *Rum is Death—Satan Owns Saloons.*

BURLY bartenders blanched when they saw the cavalcade approaching. Taverns closed their doors. But one barkeep with a barrel-chest and biceps big as cannonballs stormed out and hurled abuse. He made the mistake of referring indecently to Samantha's pantalettes and McCargo felled him with a fist that would have poleaxed a steer.

After that, there were introductions. Abigail simpered when Sparhawk told her he had never seen such a neat-turned foot nor such a head for business. Samantha blushed deeply and protested when McCargo praised her singing, but promised to meet him for lunch at the American House next day.

The new-found friends parted company at the city jail, and, as the pink elephant waddled away, the lakemen wondered how to go about freeing Pierre Lafromboise.

Deadly menace lurked in the roustabouts and cut-throats they recognized huddled in gangs about the small building with the barred windows. The setting sun splashed a dying day's blood on the river, and, when the long twilight ended, murder would stalk the shadows.

McCargo planned swiftly and strode into the jail. The turnkey was a man named Boggs, a bootlicking crimbottom with fancy pants and green galluses. His eyes were shifty as a backing wind.

"I hear," said McCargo, "you're some great shakes at poker."

Boggs slapped a pack of dirty cards on the table. "Set down and try your luck, gents. Draw or stud?"

"Draw," said McCargo. "It's your deal."

The cards were so plainly marked that Sparhawk had to cover his guffaw with a cough. Boggs dealt himself a pat hand, and, at the end of four deals his place at the table showed an international display of Great Lakes currency—Ducatoons from Flanders, Ecus d'or and silver Louis of France, Rix-dollars from Germany, Johannes and Crusadoes of Portugal, Doubloons and Pieces-of-eight, even a Pine Tree shilling that Sparhawk had managed to put into the pot.

But the fifth deal was McCargo's, and by that time, his fingers had memorized the markings on the cards. His shuffle was clumsy, but Boggs seemed satisfied. The bidding went high and the turnkey emptied his pockets to meet Sparhawk's raise. McCargo upped a hundred.

"You can see I'm strapped," snarled Boggs. "What is this— a freeze-out?"

McCargo tossed him a jewelled pencil. "Just for a laugh," he said, "write out an I.O.U. for your jail keys. I'll let that cover my raise."

Suspicion fought a losing battle with greed on Boggs' face. He signed the I.O.U. and tossed it into the pot.

In the showdown, Sparhawk turned up three aces, but Boggs showed a straight flush, king high in spades, and started to rake in the pot.

"Sheer off!" roared McCargo. "I've got a royal flush in hearts, so hand over those keys." He held up the I.O.U. "It'll be easier to explain how a prisoner escaped than to laugh off this gambling debt."

Boggs wanted no trouble, and produced the keys on McCargo's promise to tear up the note and not show it around town. Five minutes later, McCargo and Sparhawk were guiding Pierre Lafromboise up a gloomy sidetrack to the safety of the LeFevre home. They turned the corner of a warehouse and fell into a trap.

Five men, hats pulled low and slit-eyed above masking bandanas, held guns on hair triggers. "Reach!" rasped a voice.

Sparhawk and Pierre Lafromboise *reached.* The Heidelberg duelling scar on McCargo's cheek flamed in the deepening dusk. He brought his hands up slowly, then with a jerk—releasing the elastic springs of his Double Derringers. In the fraction of a second that meant the difference between life and death, the blue-nosed thunderbolts popped into his palms and spoke four times. There were two other shots, almost simultaneous, choking coughs as bodies crumpled to the dust, and the scramble of hectic flight.

A gust of wind whipped away the acrid and blinding smoke of black gunpowder delivered at almost point-blank range. McCargo's cheeks stung. Sparhawk counted heads. "Three of the General Ginch gang gone, but we lost Pierre. Fancy shootin' son, but you'll be needin' another top-decker, 'less'n ya like a ventilated lid."

McCargo bent over the body of Pierre Lafromboise. He found nothing until he searched the French Canadian's boots. The soles contained detailed maps of the border region and fine script in French. Jigsaw pieces clicked in his mind, and he stowed away the papers for Papa LeFevre and Joseph Campau.

Sparhawk hiked back to the city jail to let Boggs know there were four dead men to bolster any alibi he'd like to make about a jailbreak. McCargo had two minutes to meet his dinner engagement, and he broke into a run up Beaubien Street just as the lanterns of an aroused night watch flickered toward the warehouse.

HULDA had done herself proud, and there was no conversation at the LeFevre table beyond praise of her cooking; turtle soup from the Manitous, St. Marys broiled whitefish, morsel of sturgeon from Georgian Bay, smoked buffalo heart and tongue packed up from Chicago, Indian River partridge, Bois Blanc wild turkey, and a red deer haunch from Grand Marais, washed down with the fabulous vintage wines of Catawba and Sandusky, and topped with a delicate frozen sweet called snow cream.

The twins, bending a roguish eye on McCargo, ushered the torpid and tottering graybeards to bed; Hulda cleared the table; and Papa LeFevre and Joseph Campau palm-cupped the big-bellied brandy glasses until the warmth of their fingers brought the golden distillation of a thousand pears to fragrant life. McCargo proposed a toast to the memory of Pierre Lafromboise.

One of the brandy glasses shattered on the floor. The two old habitants aged ten years as McCargo told them the story, but their eyes grew sharp as eagles claws studying the maps and the fine French script. They filled in details McCargo had been guessing at.

Pierre had been a spy, hired by the first families of the New World on either side of the border, entrusted to find out the extent of General Ginch's proposed invasion of Canada. He had done his work nobly until thrown in jail on a trumped-up charge of rape by one of the general's camp followers.

The facts were all here on these papers, *M'sieu,* even to the zero hour for the attack against Windsor and Amherstburg across the river—tomorrow midnight. That attack would be root-hog or die for Ginch and his gang. If they could be prevented from launching it, the affair would be dead. But, if they succeeded, the old Patriot Party would join forces with the notorious Hunter's Lodges—the secret organization spread from the tip of Ontario to the toe of Huron—and the War Hawks in Congress would wink at a full-scale offensive, shot like an arrow from Lake Champlain to the heart of Canada at Quebec. Ginch and his army would grow from a snowball to an avalanche, if their banners proved victorious.

McCargo learned that discontented elements in Canada might welcome the invaders, that Canadian officials had been bribed, that American authorities were biding their time, fearful of making the wrong political move. Popular sentiment favored an invasion, always providing it clicked.

The two old habitants looked helpless at McCargo. They were without hope, and yet they retained a childish faith in the lake captain. He pulled absent-mindedly at one of his orange sideburns, remembering an invasion of Canada he had sparked not many years before. But since then, he had grown up.

In a myriad ports from Black Rock to Copper Harbor was McCargo's lifework—on the rolling rivers and the roaring lakes they tied together so that wooden ships and iron men could conquer a wilderness, house a new continent, and make way for tomorrow. He had learned that there was no room on the great waterways, for men-of-war, no excuse for a neighbor nation to snatch freedom from another.

So he promised the old habitants to do what he could, and went upstairs, knowing that only a miracle could save Canada—and prevent a war that would rip the lakes apart and send good ships to Davy Jones' Locker.

Hulda's room was next his own. He pecked in at the baby, and, mindful of the twins, asked the Norsky to keep her door ajar and her eyes peeled. She seemed to understand, and his mind was at rest when he crawled into bed and blew out the lamp, his body luxuriating in the voluptuous softness of the feathered mattress, his nudeness relishing the sleek embrace of the sheets.

He lay awake, busy with a thousand ideas. A full moon silvered the room and a playful breeze nipped muslin curtains while a gnarled bough of a great pear tree stared in at the open window, its buds breathing perfume.

There was the sound of scuffling outside his door and when he reached it, he saw Hulda already halfway down the hall, carrying the twins like kittens. Each one she held by the nape of the nightgown and their pink legs thrashed in vain.

McCargo went back to bed. He dropped asleep to awake hours or minutes later when the muslin curtains at the windows were disturbed by more than a breeze and a perfume familiar as the orchard buds stole into the room.

"Hulda," called McCargo. "Hulda!"

But the Norsky must have fallen asleep or his cry for help was too weak.

The great pear tree looked in at the window, sighing, because it was so very wise—and so very old.

NEXT morning, McCargo sent Red Massasauga and Black Pompey to spy out the enemy encampment. At noon, with Cormac at his heels, he entered the tabernacle tent in McKinstry's Public Gardens. Samantha's pantalettes were prettier than ever, but Abigail's face was curdled cream.

The lake captain who had promised her passage to Cleveland had backed out of the deal after taking a second look at Hannibal. No other skipper in port would trust the pink elephant on his decks.

"As if Hannibal would ever harm anything!" snorted Abigail.

"Except when he *really* gets drunk," said Samantha. "Remember, auntie, how he broke into that barrel of whiskey in Lockport and ran wild through the town, tearing up—"

"Hush up, child!" barked Abigail.

McCargo wiped the frown from her forehead by volunteering passage on the *Minong* at dawn. The idea of a bull elephant on *his* decks wasn't appealing, but he figured it would give him a chance to round out his quartet with Samantha and woo her away from this nonsensical Women's Rights crusade.

Over in one corner of the tent, Hannibal placidly forked hay with his trunk and stuffed it into his maw. The elephant paid no attention to Cormac, who worried one of his hind legs, licking the pink paint away until the gray hide showed through.

McCargo apologized for his dog. Abigail was gracious, explaining that the paint was a vegetable compound of her own recipe, easy to make and to apply, but it did give Hannibal a certain air that other elephants lacked.

With Samantha on his arm, McCargo took lunch at the American House. The rest of the afternoon he spent watching the temperance performance and waiting for Red Massasauga and Black Pompey to bring their report.

Sparhawk stormed at him. "We've got an invasion to re-pell, nothin' to re-pell it with, an' here ya are—the Launcielot o' the Lakes—moonin' after a gal. I'll grant ye she's bluff in the bows with a nice bit of stowage below, but we've got our work cut out for us!"

"That we have," agreed McCargo, never removing his gaze from Samantha's frothy pantalettes.

It was not until sundown that Red Massasauga and Black Pompey pulled in. The results of their scouting were bleak.

They estimated General Ginch's force at about two thousand men, tented around the Blue Boar Tavern where Ginch maintained his headquarters. The Blue Boar, built during the Indian scares, was half-tavern, half-fortress with loopholes and firing parapets. It bulged, reported McCargo's crew, with stacked arms, barrels of gunpowder and kegs of dynamite.

Sparhawk broke in on the report and made no bones about reminding McCargo that *he* had been busy while the other wasted his time on foolishness. Gossip along the waterfront had it that Ginch was taking no chances with his gang. He meant to keep the arsenal under his thumb, handing out muskets

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and such-like only when the expedition was ready to march down to the Detroit waterfront, commandeer all the propellers in port, and steam to Canada.

McCargo took Sparhawk's rebuke calmly and asked Red Massasauga whether there was any way to get close to the tent city without being observed. There was a woods, replied the Indian, about a bowshot away, and not patrolled by sentinels.

That seemed to satisfy McCargo. He sent Red Massasauga and Black Pompey back to guard the *Minong*. He took Cormac up Beaubien Street to Hulda and told the Irish wolfhound to protect Olaf.

Sparhawk followed him around with a mouth open to catch flies as he hired the biggest Conestoga wagon in town, bought a barrel of choice Monongahela, and a monstrous pair of cruel-teethed Mexican spurs.

The two lake captains looked out of place on the Conestoga behind the prancing Belgian mares. McCargo held the reins as if he were trying to decide what they were used for, and Sparhawk bawled, "Port your helm, ninny!" as they rolled into McKinstry's Public Gardens.

After the last performance of the petticoat crusade, McCargo entered the tabernacle tent and told Abigail he'd have to take back his offer of passage on the *Minong* unless she gave him the loan of her elephant for a few hours. The spinster squawked like an outraged hen, but changed her tune when McCargo put up the *Minong* as security for Hannibal's safe return. It was she who made out the contract for him to sign:

> In return for good and sufficient considerations, I, Captain Thunder Bay McCargo, agree to transport Miss Abigail K. Potter, and her niece, Miss Samantha Fields to Cleveland, and to see that their trained elephant is safe on arrival; failing which, I forfeit to the aforesaid ladies my schooner, the *Minong*.

McCargo signed the paper with a heart like a sounding lead. Then he and Sparhawk coaxed Hannibal over an improvised gangplank onto the deck of the Conestoga wagon and gee-upped for the Monroe Trail.

CHAPTER IV

MC CARGO LUCK

ON THE edge of the woods, described by Red Massasauga, they starboarded helm up a tote-road, pulled up in a stand of tall pines that had choked out all brush and smaller trees. Here there was room for the elephant to back down his gangplank, and he stretched and scratched himself against a quivering pine.

The moon chinned itself above the horizon. Through the wide-spaced trees, they saw the city of tents and the Blue Boar Inn. Sentry-challenges rang out as patrols met only a few-score rods away.

Sparhawk cushioned his jaws with Peerless Plug. "Two of us against an army." *Sp-urt.* "Figger the odds about even." *Sp-lash!*

"Three of us," said McCargo. He rolled the Monongahela barrel off the Conestoga and eased it to the pine needles. His bowie knife pried open the top and he led Hannibal to the barrel.

The pink elephant sniffed and flopped his ears. He dipped in his trunk and siphoned whiskey into his mouth.

"My Gawd!" whispered Sparhawk, and it was an awed prayer.

The level of the barrel sank. Hannibal executed a kind of shimmy. His eyes were red sparks in the night.

McCargo attached the Mexican spurs to his Wellingtons, and, with a boost-up from Sparhawk, vaulted to the elephant's back.

"So long, son," quavered Sparhawk, but he meant goodbye.

Using the signals he had watched Samantha give the elephant, McCargo guided Hannibal through the pines and out into the clearing. A startled sentinel saw the appartion and fired blindly—and ran, howling.

McCargo yanked the Colt Dragoons from his sash. He kicked his feet and stabbed the Mexican spurs into the elephant's sides.

Hannibal squealed and broke into a clumsy lope. McCargo fired the Dragoons at figures popping from the dark. Tents went down as the elephant charged

toward the buzzing flies that bit at his hide.

McCargo, holding his seat by guess and by God, stuffed the empty Dragoons into his sash, fired the Double Derringers, and drew the rapier from his walking stick, stabbing as the elephant lumbered forward.

For one second, he saw the bloated form of Uriah Ginch silhouetted against the open door of the Blue Boar Tavern; then the door slammed.

Commotion reached the skies in a crescendo of screams, shots, breaking tent poles, and the earthquake gallop of Hannibal, squealing and grunting, his ears like sails in the wind.

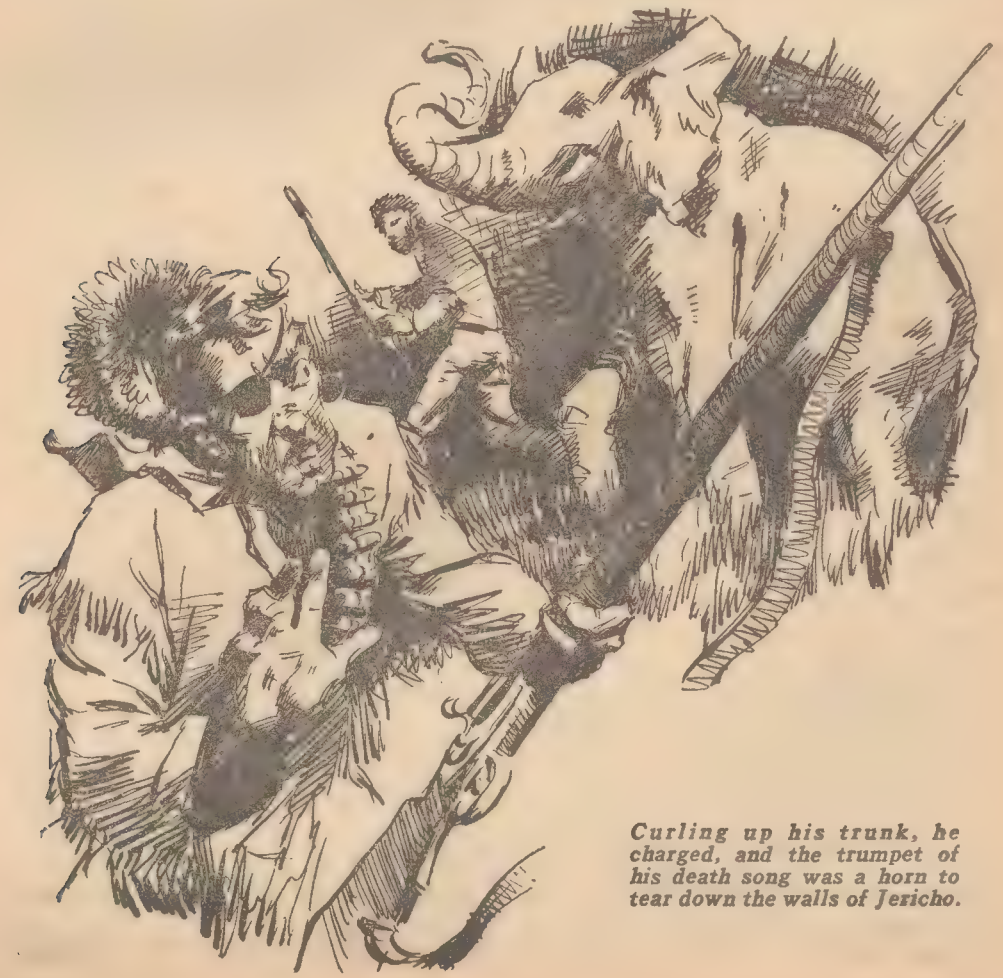
But it was a losing battle, and McCargo knew it. The city of tents would never rise again, but, from the loopholes and parapets of the Blue Boar, came a steady stream of crimson death. Uriah Ginch held his fort and his arsenal against all comers.

A piledriver slug smashed into McCargo's shoulder and spun him around on the elephant's back. He lurched, and the ground came rushing up and slapped him dizzy.

Through spinning eyes, he saw Hannibal, every gun in the tavern directed against him. The elephant coughed and sank to his knees.

General Ginch and his army let loose a hoarse cheer.

Hannibal, staggered upright, his head turning toward the tavern, his red eyes terrible in the night. Bullets pinged



Curling up his trunk, he charged, and the trumpet of his death song was a horn to tear down the walls of Jericho.

against his hide in dusty spats. Curling up his trunk, he charged, and the trumpet of his death song was a horn to tear down the walls of Jericho. Four tons of momentum crashed the tavern door and one whole side of the building disintegrated.

There was no time for screams. Hannibal must have kicked a keg of dynamite. One blinding flash, one deafening roar and the Blue Boar left the map. General Ginch and his Canadian Empire were blotted out, and the remnants of an army took to the woods.

Sparhawk carried McCargo to the Conestoga, and doctored his wounds on the way back to Detroit. "You'll live." *Sp-urt!* "But it ain't reasonable at all." *Sp-lash!*

"He was a fine elephant," said McCargo. "Let me off at the Wayne Street dock."

"Doncha wanna come along while I rout out the telegraph agent? Lordy, son, this is news!"

"I've got to explain things to the *Minong*," said McCargo. "Let me off right here."

Wearily, he climbed aboard the schooner he would have died rather than lose.

He sat on the bow and patted the mermaid's head.

"Old girl," he murmured in her ear, "I guess you'll understand how I had to trade you for a pink elephant—and Canada."

IN THE COLD, dead light of dawn, Red Massasauga and Black Pompey loaded the belongings of the two champions of Women's Rights. Samantha's pantalettes failed to bring a gleam to McCargo's eye.

Abigail K. Potter then stepped aboard the *Minong* with the possessive air only an owner can bring aboard ship.

Sparhawk came flying down Wayne Street just as they were ready to cast off. "The *Prairie Dew's* got boiler trouble again." *Sp-urt!* "Figger the ladies'll be better off for my company to Cleveland." *Sp-lash!*

They cast off, but there was none of the old buoyancy in the *Minong*. She limped past Fighting Island and Bar Point, flapped her sails at the Hen and Chickens, and wallowed sadly into Lake Erie.

Sparhawk's high spirits annoyed McCargo and McCargo's dour looks only served to broaden the grin on Sparhawk's grizzled face. Finally, he could hold his news no longer and took out a telegram from where he had tucked it in the lining of his stovepipe hat.

"Read it, son," he advised. "And you better read it, too, Abigail. It was sent to you in my care."

McCargo and Abigail read the telegram addressed to Miss A. K. Potter. It said:

THANKS TO AN OLD FRIEND HAVE JUST RECEIVED NEWS OF SENSATIONAL EXPLOIT AND HEROIC MARTYRDOM YOUR ELEPHANT IN CAUSE OF INTERNATIONAL PEACE. ON ARRIVAL CLEVELAND PLEASE ACCEPT TRAINED ELEPHANT AWAITING YOU THERE COMPLIMENTS CAPTAINS SPARHAWK AND MCCARGO AND YOUR MOST OBEDIENT SERVANT, THE KING OF SHOWMEN.

The telegram was signed Phineas T. Barnum.

"I told ya, son." *Sp-urt!* "I told ya I staked him to his first midget." *Sp-lash!*

The Downeaster turned to Abigail Potter. "If you'll look at that contract atween you and this young whippersnapper, you'll find we've lived up to all the conditions, plumb legal-like and shipshape."

Abigail drew the paper from her starched bodice. Without glancing at it, she tore it to bits and threw them to the wind.

The *Minong*, released from bondage, skipped over the waves with a tilt to her bonnets and a saucy flip of her taffrail. McCargo's thoughts veered from suicide to quartets as the Mermaid dipped her breasts to Pelee Island.

But it was Sparhawk's turn to wear a troubled face. Turning his back on the ladies for a moment and winking broadly at McCargo, he spoke about the dread ravages of Asiatic cholera. And allowed as how—although he was a teetotal man—he'd better have a drop or two of Monongahela for protection.

Abigail pricked up her ears. "Protection?" she echoed in an alarmed voice. "You haven't been exposed to cholera, have you?"

Sparhawk nodded sadly. Not only had he been exposed, but all those who had touched the telegram. The poor telegraph agent had been taken bad just before they sailed. No one knew where it was going to strike next.

Abigail's eyes followed him to the cabin and when he brought back a jug and two glasses, she asked him who the other glass was for.

"Anybody as wants it, ma'am." *Sp-urt!* "Sure cure for cholera." *Sp-lash!*

He made his apologies for drinking in front of her, she being a temperance lady and all, and willing to die rather than go against her principles.

Abigail moistened her lips. "Well," she said uncertainly, "if it's for medicinal purposes—"

"A half glass checks the disease." *Sp-urt!* "A full glass drowns it, ma'am." *Sp-lash!*

Abigail set her jaw. "Pour me a full glass," she said, and, holding her nose, drained every drop.

"Better be safe than sorry." *Sp-urt!* "These glasses might not be jist the right size." *Sp-lash!*

"Pour," said Abigail.

McCargo, handling the helm with his good arm, motioned Red Massasauga and Black Pompey over and begged Samantha to join them in a song. For some reason, she refused to sing unless her aunt stood by.

Sparhawk steered an unsteady Abigail to the helm, and the *Minong's* new quartet, in deference to the ladies, led off with the temperance hymn: *"King Alcohol is very sly—A liar from the first. . ."*

McCargo's cup of joy overflowed. Samantha's pantalettes twinkled and her soprano soared: *"The shout of temperance ladies—Is heard on every gale—hic!—"*

Samantha looked startled and McCargo wondered at the hiccup, but the quartet continued as if its soprano had not broken tempo.

"They're chanting—hic!—now in victory sly—A liar from the first. . ."

Samantha stopped moving her lips, flushed scarlet, and ran into the cabin, but an indomitable soprano still sounded from the helm.

"Gin and ale—hic!" finished Abigail defiantly, and slipped to the deck, drunk as a sailor. . .

Sparhawk always just about fell out of the deacon seat as soon as he came to the hiccup part of the story, and when he began to laugh it could be heard from the Steamboat Hotel over to the Welland Canal.

"Yes sir, the pretty one couldn't carry a tune from here to the cuspidor and the old gal had a face to bust a clock but could sing like a teakettle and pitch it right up from her belly without hardly moving her lips a-tall.

"That's the McCargo luck for you. He runs into a pair of pantalettes and a ventriloquist. They was a couple o' fakers from Dan to Beersheba. Their elephant wasn't pink, he was painted. The gal couldn't sing, she just pretended. And, as for that maiden aunt of hers. . .

"She wasn't even a maiden aunt." *Sp-urt!* "Leastways not when we got to Cleveland." *Sp-lash!*

Statement of the ownership, management, circulation, etc., required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, as amended by the acts of March 3, 1933, and July 2, 1946 of Adventure, published monthly at Chicago, Illinois, for October 1, 1948. State of New York, county of New York, ss. Before me, a Notary Public, in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Harold S. Goldsmith, who having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Publisher of Adventure, and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, as amended by the acts of March 3, 1933, and July 2, 1946 (section 537, Postal Laws and Regulations), printed on the reverse of this form, to wit: 1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher, Harold S. Goldsmith, 205 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y.; Editor, Henry Steeger, 205 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y.; Managing Editor, none. Business Manager, none. 2. That the owner is: Popular Publications, Inc., 205 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y., Henry Steeger, 205 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y., Harold S. Goldsmith, 205 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y.; Shirley M. Steeger, 205 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y. 3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: none. 4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner, and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest, direct or indirect, in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him. Harold S. Goldsmith, Publisher. Sworn to and subscribed before me this 15th day of October, 1948. Era M. Walker, Notary Public, New York County Clerk's No. 116. Register's No. 363-W-0. (My commission expires March 30, 1950.) [Seal]—Form 3526—Rev. 7-46.

DOG MAN

He brought the pitch-heavy slab of wood in a rising half-circle that ended with a splattering thud against Thornton's forehead.

By WILLIAM FULLER

THORNTON'S eyes stared lifelessly, accusingly, at Rand. Rand stumbled backward. Thornton's eyes seemed to follow him. Rand could hear the nervous ticking of Thornton's pocket watch. He could see, in the glittering moonlight, the swollen, gaping wound that started at the outer corner of Thornton's left eyebrow, stretching diagonally across his forehead and disappeared into the blood-matted hair above his right ear.

Rand became conscious of the fact that the stick of fatpine stove wood with which he had struck Thornton, was still in his right hand. He dropped it into the sand at his feet. His hand was sticky with sap. He brushed it spastically against the flank of his worn jeans.

"Ringo," he called, "Ringo!"

There was no sound.

"Ringo!"

The roar of a truck motor from the clay driveway in front of Thornton's sagging frame house was his answer. He ran toward the house, then suddenly stopped, realizing the futility of chase.

He looked back toward Thornton's barn. The dark, crumpled shape of the

ILLUSTRATED BY PETE KUHLHOFF

man who had been Thornton lay, moonlight-outlined, upon the sand. He could feel the staring eyes still upon him.

He had killed men in battle, and then, crouched behind the spitting potency of a thirty-caliber machine gun, the act had been mechanical, a part of the deadly routine, of no greater importance than the care and cleaning of equipment. He had often wondered how it felt to kill a man of his own volition . . .

And now he knew. The caving feeling in his long legs told him. The cold hand clutching within him told him. The pounding of his heart told him. Joe Rand, who had never known real fear, was afraid. And through his fear the events of the past three minutes came to him with startling clarity.

"You're too damn smart," Thornton was telling him.

Ringo was laughing. Ringo always laughed when Thornton spoke.

Rand turned to Ringo. "Shut up!"

Ringo was suddenly quiet.

These men were no friends of Rand's. He had shown them where to build their still, deep in the reaches of Tiger Swamp. He had helped them with their supplies. He had scouted the trails, watching, listening, for signs of detection, passing the word to them when conditions were right for operation or for the removal of their finished product. The actual operation of the still, the marketing of the shine, had been left to Thornton and Ringo.

"I know you pulled a hundred gallons last week, Thornton," Rand said. "That's four hundred dollars. A third of that is something like a hundred and thirty-three dollars. Get it up."

"We never pulled more than forty-fifty gallons. You stay around here and tend to business with me and Sam, instead of horsing around the countryside with them dogs of yours, you'd know more about the business."

"That's right, Mal," Ringo said.

Rand ignored Ringo, whom he simply despised as a weak and sniveling man. He faced the huge and slack-faced Thornton. He knew this man was dangerous. The show-down had been building for some time. Rand was glad that it had arrived.

"Get it up," he repeated, his eyes flat.

Thornton stepped backward.

Rand followed him, arms hanging loosely at his sides. As Thornton's hand clawed at the bulging hip pocket of his trousers, Rand half-stumbled over the slab of fatpine cordwood that lay in the sand at his feet. He ducked and swept the fatpine from the sand. In one continuous, rhythmic movement he brought the pitch-heavy slab of wood in a rising half-circle that ended with a splattering thud against Thornton's forehead. The .45 in Thornton's hand spoke once, harmlessly, as Thornton slumped down to the sand.

Sam Ringo ran to the crumpled form. Rand knew instinctively that Thornton was dead before Ringo, his voice rising shrilly in fear, told him so.

AND NOW he stood, halfway behind Thornton's house and his barn, gathering his shuddering thoughts. The nearest telephone, he knew, was at the cross roads. It did not occur to him that Ringo, for fear of implicating himself, might not call for help. Ringo would be at the telephone in twenty minutes. The sheriff would take perhaps thirty minutes to prepare for the man hunt. Forty minutes from the County seat to the crossroads. Twenty minutes more to Thornton's. Rand, with sweating effort, made his calculations.

Almost two hours. A man can cover a lot of ground in two hours—a man like Rand, who knew the piney woods, who knew the marsh and the swamp. Two hours. A man traveling fast, could skirt the shore of the Little Deer in two hours. He could head east then, over Coon Hammock, through the marshland beyond, and reach the Kissimmee River by sunup. He could cross the river—swim it if he couldn't find a boat. A man could find kinfolk—lie low, wait . . .

There'd be dogs most likely; Sheriff John Maloon swore by his hounds. Rand respected hounds—had always raised them himself—but he knew that no hound could track a man who knew their ways, who kept his head . . .

Rand breathed deeply. His head cleared. He felt now the lean young strength surging again through his body.

He ran to the edge of Thornton's clearing. As he vaulted the barbed-wire fence and felt the firmer footing of the piney woods beneath his feet, a sense of near-exhilaration swept him. The footing was firm, not wet, from the recent rains—a good night for a hunt. Let 'em come, Rand thought, Let 'em come! He was Joe Rand! Joe Rand was a name to remember. Joe Rand was a man to deal with!

He grinned now, feeling his strength, as he thought of the silences that hung like thick smoke in the crossroads' jukes when he entered. What did they know—the soft-bellied ones, the women-trapped ones, the weak ones, the hog-fat ones—of the way a man felt? What did they know of the blackness in a man that drove him to violence?

He remembered, suddenly, the night in Gomer's Place when the Ransome boys had crossed him. Al Ransome's words had splattered against Rand's fist and Al had gone down, groaning, before the bar. Brook Ransome had screamed as his arm had cracked and his fresh-honed jackknife had clanked to the floor. The action, then as always had thrilled him. He had stood before the bar, eyes glittering black, the lean muscles of his chest and arms loose, feeling stronger than God. A juke girl had laughed then, softly, and her eyes upon him had been dark and animal-shining . . .

Joe Rand. They didn't fool none with Joe Rand. He mouthed the words now between tightened lips as his distance-eating strides took him deeper into the piney woods. His walk became almost a run as he headed for the swamp that choked the shores of Little Deer Lake. As he drove forward he thought of his hounds—Tom, Old Lady, Beulah—the best wildcat and fox hounds in the state of Florida! He was glad he'd never penned them. They'd shift for themselves. His heart was heavy within them as he thought that he'd never hunt them again. A man loves a dog, well . . . there's nothing will take its place, this love . . .

He came to the edge of the swamp. He felt for the watery path through the darkness that only he and his dogs had known. Giant, moss-hung cypresses stood like pale ghosts beside the trail. The odor of decay was heavy. A cottonmouth moccasin lay coiled on a floating tussock in a pool by the trail and tilted its flat head as Rand approached. Rand's eyes, accustomed to the darkness, saw the snake and ignored it. He was sweating now and the sweat loosened his muscles and his body was a machine, traveling instinctively, surely, toward the shores of the lake. And as he traveled his mind groped backward and he was with Sheriff John Maloon, sitting in the sheriff's car parked on the rutted road that passed Rand's shack. It was just after his trouble with the Ransomes.

John Maloon was a soft-spoken man. "What ails you, Joe?" he asked.

"I thought you come to talk dogs."

"I want to know what ails you."

Rand laughed and the laugh was harsh. "I'm doing all right."

"I've known you since you were a kid, Joe," Maloon said. "I've hunted with you. You were a good kid with a pack of hounddogs. You were always a wild kid, like some sort of woods-varmint, but you never did any harm. Now it's dif-

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ferent. Now you're heading for trouble."

How could he explain to this man the driving restlessness that he felt, his contempt for all confining forces and the men who succumbed to them? How could he explain these things when he didn't understand them himself? "I'll take care of myself," he said.

"You know how I feel about a dog man," Maloon said. "I wouldn't give you the time of day if you weren't a dog man. I never did see a man who understood a hounddog who didn't have some good in him somewhere."

"You don't want to worry none about me."

The soft voice was now edged with impatience. "You're not as tough as you think you are."

Rand's lips twisted in a grin.

"I'm warning you, Joe. I've got nothing on you. I think you're running a still, but I can't prove it. I think you're mixed up someways with Mal Thornton and Sam Ringo—a pair of bad actors—but I can't prove that, either. You've like to killed half-a-dozen men in these juke-house brawls. You think you're tough. I think you're a headstrong kid with a black temper and damned little judgment. You're heading for trouble, Joe—real trouble. And when it comes I'll be waiting. I've seen harder men than you, Joe. I'll get you."

Rand felt the familiar surge of hatred within him. No man had ever spoken to him like this. His hands clenched at his sides. His whole being yearned for violence, yet some remaining vestige of judgment told him that this was neither the time nor the place for it. He threw open the door of the car and swung to the ground beside it.

John Maloon spoke easily then, as if he were not aware of the violence he had fanned aflame. "By the way," he said, "what I meant to tell you tonight was I won't be needing that April pup out of Beulah. I've happened onto a little Walker bitch with the finest nose in the country. She's no bench dog: she's sprawly, liver-colored and homely. She's a silent tracker—never sounds off till I give her a blast of the cow horn—and I work her with a bell on her collar. Fanny's friendly—wouldn't hurt a flea. But that nose! She's a man-hunting fool, that Fanny. She'll trail through water. She'll trail a fourteen-hour track for twenty-five miles and never lose the scent. You always admired a good dog, Joe. You ought to come see her."

Rand slammed the door violently.

"You ought to come see her," the sheriff repeated.

"Go to hell!" Rand shouted.

John Maloon laughed softly and left.

RAND WENT to his hands and knees and burrowed beneath briars. Just ahead he could see the tangled mass of willows at the shore of the lake. Still crawling, he came to the lake, thrust his head forward and drew great draughts of cool water into his parched mouth.

He thought of the dog, the Walker hound Fanny, of which the sheriff had bragged. More than likely, he thought, a dog, any dog, would lose a track in the brackish water over which he had just passed. Maybe, though—just maybe—this Walker hound Fanny was somewhere as good as the sheriff had claimed. Better not take any chances, he thought. He stood and walked into the lake. The bottom sloped gradually. He sloshed his way into the deepening water through and beyond the bonnet beds. He pushed ahead then, shoulder deep, parallel to the shore. Wouldn't have much time for this, he figured: few hundred yards. Throw the dogs off if they've got this far. Might pick up the scent where he came out, but that wasn't likely. Hounds wouldn't range so far to pick up a track in swamp like that on the shore. Twenty-five miles on a cold track! Trail through water! Rand had seen some good dogs. He'd know them, understood them—some of the best. What kind of damn fool'd Maloon think he was, giving him stuff like that?

And then, from roughly halfway between Mal Thornton's place and the shore of the lake, he heard the full cry of hounds on a scent. The bays were chop-mouthed, bristling, and Rand knew them. They were John Maloon's hounds, the man-hunters.

So Ringo had called the sheriff. Rand had known he would.

Rand thought suddenly of the nights, the innumerable nights, he had sat by a fire on the hump at the bend of Bullfrog Branch and listened to the music of his hounds—Old Lady, Beulah and Tom—as they gave chase to wildcat or fox. Then, the sound of the bays had been music—lovely mysterious music—all mixed up somehow, in a man's mind. All mixed up with the love of a man for a fine dog, the thrill of the chase, the clean smell of the woods at night. All mixed up with strange and unknown urgings . . .

But now listening to Maloon's dogs, there was no music. The sounds were harsh and discordant. Brutal sounds; sounds to be hated.

Rand forced his tiring legs shoreward. He struggled to the bank at the base of a willow, perhaps four hundred yards east of where he had entered the water. The roots of the willows that crowded the shore of the Little Deer were interlaced above the mud. Rand drove himself, slipping, grasping at branches, along this platform of roots. Panic set his pace. Several times he fell and was only dimly conscious of the jutting branches that tore at his hands and arms and raked his face. Blood mingled now with sweat in his mouth. And behind him closer now at the edge of the swamp came the bristling bays of the hounds.

He left the shore of the lake where the swampy mass gave way to high ground. On the high ground he paused. His breath came in tight, rasping gasps. He felt for the strength that had always been his and was amazed to find it gone. A great weariness, a sodden heaviness of body, had come in its place. He slumped to the ground.

Maloon's hounds were sounding again from deep in the swamp. The bays were angry now, sharp with disappointment. Rand knew they had lost the track. With this realization came a measure of calmness. His breathing became steady. Strength crept slowly into his body. His mind cleared. You, he told himself, you getting rabbity at the sound of a hound. You . . .

He sat up. He shook his head. They'll never trail me through that water—never! He pictured John Maloon, heavy now with exhaustion, floundering about in the slime, cursing, his voice no longer soft. John Maloon and his fat deputies. Deputies, he thought, how come deputy sheriffs are always fat?

He laughed.

East of the high ground—toward the river—there was a burn a quarter-mile wide, Rand remembered. A burn wouldn't always stop a hound, but it would help in case—just in case—they got this far. The sound of the bays, still deep in the swamp, was now triumphant. Rand knew they had picked up the track. He stood and trotted across the high ground toward the burn.

The blackened hulks of charred cabbage palms across the burn were grotesque in the moonlight. The twisted, gutted shapes reminded him of Mal Thornton. Mal Thornton's face, crying out for pity as he lay there in the reddening sand, was before him now. And the eyes were staring at Rand. Rand swept the back of a hand across his face. He concentrated on the details of the past three hours in an effort to erase the image of that face, those eyes, from his mind.

It occurred to him that he hadn't noticed, had forgotten to notice whether or not Sam Ringo had taken the .45 from Thornton's lifeless hand. Ringo, Rand knew, was a coward. He wouldn't have had the courage to use the weapon. Rand supposed, however, that he had taken it. And that was the end of any plea of self defense. Ringo would string along with Thornton. Ringo hated him, Maloon hated him, they all hated him. He was right in running. The cards were stacked now, he thought bitterly. Maloon had been waiting for something like this—just waiting. He wished, however, that he had had the presence of mind to look for that .45. There was an outside chance that Ringo hadn't taken it. Rand might have use for a .45. He wouldn't hesitate. His only weapon—and sorry protection it was—was the jackknife in his hip pocket.

HE WAS at the outer edge of the burn. He stood at the tangled border of Coon Hammock—a mile-wide, virgin mass of briar and vine-grown forest of live oak and palm. As he felt his way in-

to the thickness the sound of the sheriff's dogs, bewildered, came to him from the shore of the Little Deer. He grinned. That was where he'd fooled them, he thought. That was the end of the track. They'd never pick it up from— He tensed.

From the far side of the high ground coming up from the lake, he had heard —or had imagined that he heard—the almost indistinguishable tinkle of a bell.

Briars ripped at his flesh as he crashed through the forest.

He was staggering with exhaustion when he came to the far side of the hummock and stared out onto the marsh that shimmered away to the river. He had listened for the sound of the bell, but had heard it no more. He stumbled into the marsh feeling the viscous slime grasping at his feet and ankles, feeling the sharpness of the waist-high needle grass, feeling the numbness of his legs.

Halfway across the two-mile stretch of marshland he heard again from deep within the hammock the baying of the hounds. And behind—much further back —the muffled, calling voice of a man.

And finally, his mind a red flame of exhaustion, he threw himself into the shoal waters of the Kissimmee River. The water soothed him, refreshed him to some extent. He forced himself to his feet then and looked back across the marsh. The grayness of early dawn lighted the sky behind him. The dark figures of early-feeding cattle, belly-deep in the grass, spotted the marsh. He could see no alien figure.

He forced his thoughts to the job at hand. He strained his eyes to the far bank of the river. Two hundred yards here, he estimated. The recent rains had swollen the river and the swirling water showed white in the channel halfway across. There were no bridges in the section and he wished for time to search the shore for a boat. He was a strong swimmer ordinarily, but now, limp with fatigue, he dreaded the thing he must do. There was no alternative. He fumbled his sodden shoes from his feet, knotted the laces, and looped the shoes about his neck. He staggered, half fell, into the river.

The current swept at him, mocking his weakness. He struggled and his legs were weighted and the hot air tore at his lungs. He reached the halfway channel. The shore ahead took form, and as he fought himself forward the shore became to him the end of all yearning. He was swept downstream. His efforts now became automatic, nerve-inspired, and he wondered, vaguely, how long his body could function without strength to feed it. A feeling of lassitude overcame him—and through this lassitude came, ironically and for the first time, a humility of sorts.

His arms and legs flailed, instinctively, weakly, at the current. Mal Thornton's face was before him again, in the black waters of the river. And Mal's face was no longer crying out for pity. Mal's face was laughing now, laughing its great slack-jawed and evil laugh. Rand's scream lifted and hung throbbing above the rush of the waters and, finding some hidden reserve of strength, he struck, again and again at the face that taunted him.

He was numbly amazed to feel his hand strike a jutting snag above the swollen current. The snag was sharp and it tore at his hand as he held to it, but he felt no pain. He drew breath into his lungs. He realized then that the rush of water had quieted.

He saw just beyond him the bank rising from water. He rested. And with the bank now looming high above him, he forced himself through the few remaining yards of water.

Rand crawled up the bank, too weary to stand. His aching body cried out for rest, for sleep. He was safe now—for awhile. Now he must rest. In two hours, three hours, he'd have the strength to go on. He'd get his bearings, find Jim Yancey or the Rands his cousins. Lie now. . .

But now he must rest.

HE STOOD painfully and stumbled through the thickness of trees and brush behind the bank. Behind him, across the river and perhaps a half mile north, he heard again the excited baying of the hounds. The sound was to him, a strange relief. The silence had become ominous. Now he knew, at least, where his hunters were. Now he knew that the tinkling bell he had heard from within the hammock had been no figment of his imagination.

He had no fear of being found here. The track had been wiped out by the river. The hunt was over. Sometime soon, in all probability, they would organize another hunt on this side of the river. By that time he would be safely hidden.

Ahead of him he saw a palmetto thicket at the base of a tiny hillock. At the edge of the thicket he went once more to his hands and knees. He burrowed into the thicket. A few yards inside he found space to curl his length. Jagged roots pressed against his body, but he did not feel them. Here, for awhile he thought again, he was safe.

His eyes closed. Numbness crept along his body and in five minutes only a small portion of his mind remained alert.

The bell sounded just outside the thicket. Rand listened. There was no sound of voices. John Maloon's words raced through his mind. *She'll trail through water. You always admired a good dog, Joe, you ought to come see her. You ought to come see her. . .*

Rand groped for the knife in his hip pocket.

Fanny's friendly, wouldn't hurt a flea . . .

Rand opened the knife, thumbed its keen blade. He whistled softly.

There was a friendly moan just outside the thicket.

Cut her right, Rand thought, and she'll never make a sound. She's trailed me across the river and Maloon's on the far side. He'll be a long time getting across. They'll never find her here till maybe the buzzards give her away. By that time I'll be long-gone . . .

He whistled again, this time louder.

The dog was wary.

Rand crept to the edge of the thicket.

Fanny sat there, wagging her tail tentatively. She was as John Maloon had described her; wet now, with the mud of the bank on her legs and belly; sprawly, liver-colored and homely; a sorry-looking thing.

Rand sat on the ground. "Here, gal," he whispered.

Fanny wriggled happily toward him. She had done her job. John Maloon was nowhere in sight or smell. She expected affection for a job well done. She came closer to Rand. Rand's fingers tightened on the handle of his knife. By God, he thought, here's a dog. I'd never believe it if I hadn't seen it. Here's a hound with a nose. Through swamp, hammock, marsh, water twice. Here is a dog. . .

His left hand caressed her ugly head. He moved his knife toward her throat.

She laid her head in his lap. She looked up at him.

And Rand was again, in his mind, by the fire on the hump at the bend of Bullfrog Branch. The music of the baying hounds was coming to him from the bayhead below the branch, and the dogs were on the trail of a fox, Rand knew, and the fox was heading for Tiger Swamp. Old Tom, the sweetest-mouthed hound in the State of Florida was in the lead; then Beulah, then Old Lady. . . And the music was lovely and mysterious and it was all mixed up in a man's mind . . .

The knife edged tentatively, gently, along the dog's throat. From across the river came the sound of a cow horn, and Rand knew that John Maloon was commanding his dog to give notice of her whereabouts.

Fanny stirred restively. In a moment, he knew, she would bay. Now she was entranced with the gentleness of Rand's caressing, for Rand had a way with dogs.

He gently gathered the loose houndskin at the back of her neck, drawing the slack from her throat. One swift stroke. It must be done painlessly. A man can hear a yelp for miles if the mind is right.

His right arm tensed.

Fanny whimpered with pleasure.

Now, now, now . . . Rand told himself.

Fanny looked at him trustingly.

The knife dropped from Rand's nerveless fingers.

And that's where John Maloon found his dog—in Joe Rand's lap. The sheriff's quick eye saw the knife in the sand beside them.

Rand looked slowly at the two deputies with Maloon, then at Maloon, himself. "You got a dog—you got a dog, here," he said quickly.

The sheriff's voice was deep with understanding. "I'll save you a pup, Joe," he said. "Sam Ringo said it was self-defense. The .45 was in Thorton's hand when we found him. It won't go too hard for you, Joe. I'll save you a pup. . ."

ILLUSTRATED BY
FRANK KRAMER

A spasm of rage twisted the killer's face as the slugs hammered into the bodies of Barzac and Knowles.

LEYTE MOON

By LESLIE BIGELOW

AT LOOSE ends overnight in a strange town, I usually visit the local chess club or the chess corner of the local YMCA. So after a broiled snapper steak at Dyer's in Toledo I strolled over to the Y, a Moorish surprise, tiled and crenellated, and had the fortune to find a game at once: a chap in my own mid-thirties, discharge button in his lapel, pebbled leather briefcase beside him, pen in the breast pocket of his gray gabardine beside a handkerchief fashionably three-pointed. He was not quite the usual public chess player, some of whom are pimpled sprouts playing shallow, clever games and checkmating with a modesty as phony as their tweeds; or men getting on, annuitants and pensioners, who argue over the Evans gambit as though over ultimate truth; or occasionally a quiet serious man, a preacher, lunatic, or embezzler, playing soundly

without seeming to be there at all.

My man was perhaps a salesman, though he lacked the true perfected brass; or an auditor, though his suit was a trifle too merry for that discreet profession; or a young executive just assigned to Libbey-Owens-Ford and lonely, though his manner was too contained for loneliness.

We played our first game to a cautious draw, trying each other out. He won the second with a formidable queen's side development—still routine. But in the third, with luck in the position of a knight, and with forethought in the calculated sacrifice of a bishop which he recklessly gobbled up, we came to an end game in which, though I was out-manned, I forced him to resign.

"Well," he said. "Well, I have the pieces, but I guess I'm licked."

He said it again, although now he was not watching the board, "I have the pieces, but I guess I'm licked."

Then he smiled at me and waved toward my lapel. "What branch of the service?"

"Air Forces."

"Air Forces? What kind of outfit?"

"Air service group. You know, airstrip maintenance."

"Overseas?"

"Yeah. Philippines."

He began to come to focus. "Which island?"

"Leyte."

"My God, Leyte! Remember Tacloban?"

"Sure."

"Dulag?"

"Sure."

"Bay-Bay?"

"Sure, and Ormoc and all the barrios between."

He picked up his rooks and stacked them. He mustered all his pieces around the rooks symmetrically and said, carefully, "I had the pieces, but I was licked."

SOMETHING told him I had noted the change of tense. As though I had given him a countersign he leaned back at ease. "Leyte!" he said. "Leyte! Our little brown brothers, our dear damned brown brothers, and the island of Leyte. On Leyte Gulf." He tossed a bishop in the air and caught it; then flipped it from hand to hand as though about to make it disappear.

"What the hell," he said, "they can't hang me now."

"No. I don't know what it is, but they certainly can't hang you now."

"Your word against my word, if it came to that."

"Right. They cancel out."

He leaned forward. "Did you ever hear of Major Singko?"

For a long while he talked of Major Singko, summoning the Philippines into this silly Moorish room. While he talked, the business of the Y clattered along. "Mr. Evans," imperiously brayed the loudspeaker. "Mr. Evans, long distance from Detroit. Booth two, please." Sweaty youngsters burst in from the gymnasium, admitting the locker room smell—sweat, damp, and disinfectant. Until the pneumatic latch pulled the door closed behind them, I could hear the showers hiss and divers splash in the pool or yell as they landed belly-flopper. Meanwhile he brought Leyte into the air around us, the old empty island south of Luzon, and the locker smell and the noise began in an odd way to seem corrupt and strange. The old island came clear before us with its black surly peaks, the old water of Leyte Gulf nudging the coconut wharves of the invasion, the jungle moonlight, and Major Singko; against that picture capered these Toledo lads, wet, noisy, and full of vitamins, so damned sanitary and so damned futile. I remembered an old watchmaker in Tacloban, wizened, patient, expert. I remembered Marina, who gave me woven slippers; Zosimo, who saved my life. "Mr. Evans, Mr. Evans, please . . ."

For three days (the chessplayer said), I lay in a pyramidal tent with seven other men at the 22nd Replacement Depot five miles outside Manila, waiting for the *S. S. General Weigle* and return Stateside. Four years in the Air Forces: Jefferson Barracks, Chanute Field, Knollwood Field, Miami Beach, Hollandia, Leyte. The heat was dry, but stood steadily at 100 degrees, and on the fourth day I began. I had determined, I had sworn, not to do certain things. Now in a trance of

heat and haze I began to do them. I dressed, hitch-hiked into Manila, and over a lukewarm Budweiser in a lean-to saloon on Rizal Street I laid out the pattern.

There were five things to do. I laid them out in an ascending scale of danger, and I told myself that if anything went askew, anything at all, I'd drop the idea and go home like a good little fellow, and get my discharge, and join the reserve, and go to Legion barbecues, and all that. You know: clean start, chin up, here we come.

First I went to the waterfront by the big power plants on barges to talk with Militante, wharf manager for one of the Luzon syndics, an Elizavalde. We'd dealt before over whisky allotments for the outfit, and I trusted him. In any case, none of these things made sense by itself. Militante agreed to have an LST off Bay-Bay, the southwestern port of Leyte, in five days. We settled for $750; he began to bargain at $2200.

Next I wired Cornelio Bassa at San Jose, Leyte, that I had changed my mind about the supply room deal.

Then I wired my old house-boy, Felipe Quodras, at Rizal, Leyte, to pass the word that Major Singko was on the march: excitement would assist my little game. These answers were in next day. So far so good; so far, innocent enough.

I honestly believe I hoped for some slip to make me drop the whole thing; now some perverse compulsion drove me ahead. A new PX had opened across the Pasig River in Manila, and I chatted with a PX officer I'd spotted. I'd looked for a bustler, over-efficient, noisy, coarse. If he were new, then all his bounce might be the mistakes of a beginner. But if he were an old hand, then I had my man, a man for the angle, a man for number one, a man for the percentage. I arranged with this second looey to exchange a good many thousand pesos into dollars. You remember how tough exchange was? The peso wasn't worth the rigged price, and only the Army would exchange at two pesos for the dollar. The lieutenant learned nothing about my business; nobody had learned anything yet.

Then the last step, the risky one. I visited the headquarters of a transportation battalion near the Roosevelt Club and chatted with the sergeant-major. I needed a fake order cut, temporarily reinstating me as supply officer for my old air service outfit on Leyte. For $100 he cut me an order, forged the mimeographed signature; and then, as I moved away, I saw him slip a paper in his pocket. He had kept a copy, and he thought he had me.

"Sergeant!"

"Yes, sir."

"What's that paper?"

"Paper, sir?"

"That paper, Sergeant."

"Oh, that. Letter from my girl, sir. Lives in Roanoke, sweet as—"

"Let's have it." He edged away. "Let's have it!"

He smiled.

"Sergeant!"

"Yes, sir." He was openly insolent now, having a hell of a time.

"Sergeant, on January 19th a truckload of cigarettes was dispatched from your outfit for the depot of the Philippine Central Railroad en route to Batangas. Right?"

He came closer at once.

"Right, Sergeant?" He said nothing.

"The driver, Sergeant, was Corporal Leonard Jackson of your outfit. You asked to stand guard."

He began to fumble at his pocket.

"That night, Sergeant, the truck was high-jacked just outside Santo Tomas University, wasn't it, Sergeant? Corporal Jackson was shot, wasn't he Sergeant? *Wasn't* he, Sergeant? But Sergeant, the University is south of here; the Philippine Central station is north. Right, Sergeant?"

He was very quiet.

"And, Sergeant, there were witnesses."

He handed me the paper.

One more trifle. I hitch-hiked into Manila again and went directly to the Army dock. Finally I saw the assistant transportation officer, a coarse-jowled ex-corporal of the regular army. When he stopped yarning to a sergeant about a killing on a doped horse at Tia Juana, I asked him, "When is the *General Weigle* due, Major?"

"Confidential information."

"How confidential?"

"Damned confidential, captain."

"You know," I said, "I'll bet you 100 pesos you don't know yourself."

"Huh?"

"I'll bet you 100 pesos you don't know, Major." I rose, drew out two purple 50 peso notes and turned aside.

"Captain," he said finally, "that was a damned poor bet. You lose." He unlocked the file drawer of his desk and showed me a Frisco army radio.

"My God," I said, "I was wrong. My luck is lousy, really lousy. Well, so it goes, Major, doesn't it?"

I had eight days altogether.

IN THE Y we were farther than ever from the yawp of the speaker and the fume of the gymnasium. I knew that I had partly closed my eyes, to re-trace the Philippines; and I saw that he had, too. "Heat, heat, heat," he said. "Ruin, stink, and money. Oh, that damned money! But I still don't know just why I did it." He tossed the rooks idly. I said nothing at all.

Next morning (he said), I hitch-hiked into Manila for the last time with a jaded gang of merry-makers who who doggedly back for another whirl at the Manila Hotel and a girl named Totsy. I turned off at Nichols Field, and found a place in a C-54 on the mail run to Tacloban, the Provincial Capitol of Leyte, Base K headquarters. The left engine was a little loose in the mount, and the whole plane quivered. But after circling the field twice, undecided, the pilot turned south, and the green hills and the dappled bays begin to slip below.

And what did I see beneath? Nothing American. You know, the Philippines are 12,000 miles from Toledo, and the American has a quaint view of them: little brown brothers and copra and sugar and bearded coast-wise traders and betel-chewing Mohammedans in silken jackets on Mindanao and the benevolent print of America over all of it. But nothing marks the Philippines—you've been there and you know—nothing marks the Philippines like the old Spanish trace. In Manila what else is solid but the old Spanish walled-city, Intramuros; and what marks settlements everywhere in the islands but the old cathedrals? They are all you see from the air, along with the old terraces of the Igorrotes. They are all that is really there. America lies thin over the Philippines like a disinfected scab.

A five hour run to Tacloban; and then the true smell of the Philippines! Ah, that smell: cocoanut oil a little rancid on the women's hair, charcoal in braziers, a tidal stink of copra, and a hot dusty smell, a smell of old dust. There's a haze of dust always, and the dust is the dust of a thousand years.

I went to the Base K finance office by the docks to find my ride. Lieutenant Johnson, the Labor Control Officer of my old outfit, drawing his bi-weekly Flip payroll, was delighted to have company riding south. Our air service group was the southernmost American detachment on Leyte, south of Dulag even; and Johnson had a 25-mile ride in a worn-out jeep over a worn-out road through substantially hostile territory with $7500.

As we racketed out of Tacloban I asked him, "Are Knowles and Barzac still in camp?"

He stiffened. "Yes," he said, "still around, and still at it."

Just past 13th Air Force headquarters and north of Dulag, by the old hill with its masonry watch tower from which the Leyte folk looked timidly out for pirates from Mindanao, we stopped at a white jeep slanted across the road: an MP road block. The Pfc. who checked my orders whistled sympathetically.

"Sent back, eh? Tough luck."

"Yeah. Back for a few days. What's the trouble?"

"Singko's loose again."

"What of it?"

"We don't want any ammo getting through to him."

Now, you say you remember Major Singko? We never quite figured his game, but apparently he was a guerilla leader, skulking in southern Leyte until the Americans all left, when he hoped to grab the provincial government—for better government, he claimed—for loot, I dare say. Meanwhile he supported his ragged regiment of village paupers, Philippine Army cast-offs, and a few American deserters by looting villages. With the major

baying the Philippine moon again, my plan might run unnoticed.

When we reached the post, little Jack, the Philippine terrier I had had to abandon, jumped into my lap. What is a Philippine terrier? He's a screw-tailed dog, a little larger than a fox terrier, creamy beneath and creamy dark-brown above, with everything on his wise little face, ears and all, set just a little askew, so that you know he's a heathen terrier and no Christian dog. How did he know I was in that jeep? How, indeed?

As we drove in, a soldier in clogs with a towel around his middle picked his way across from the shower; washerwomen, with a rag-tag of children, prowled among the tents. The headquarters CQ leaned back from the first sergeant's desk, reading an army pocket book by a hanging bulb, and little green-backed beetles buzzed against the screen which was the lower part of the walls of all the buildings.

The post, a little oblong of dingy pyramidal tents, huddled around three tin-roofed buildings, the headquarters, supply, and mess, within one hundred yards of Leyte Gulf. North of the post an arm of the Gulf came in to a curve around the post, rancid and green, like an ulcerous arm. The water of this estuary, bubbly-foul, malarial, fluke-ridden, stank among the reeds and jettisoned debris, and I remembered how I'd asked Sergeant Thompson to dump a ruined safe there; how he'd tumbled in after it; how the doctor looked when he diagnosed the flukes—pin-worms, no smaller than pin-worms—entering the very skin itself to set up a hideous ambush in the blood and glands and liver. Rot and elephantiasis—the very devil lived in that water.

It was dark now, and the CQ quartered me with a young warrant officer who'd not gone to the movies. We sat in his tent listening to the far-off squawk of the sound track—root-a-toot-toot went the hero's gun over the plash of Leyte Gulf—and he talked very gently, very decently, about God. I watched the palm fronds against the moon through the screened sides of the tent, and very gently he talked on. Whether he was dogmatically sound, I do not know. He deserved to be; I can say no more of him than that his feelings were not brassily out of tune on old Leyte, the old island of Leyte, in the Philippines.

The old island, and the dead island, too. I've watched there for life, for the color of the tropics. But there is no life. The heavy swell of Leyte Gulf plashes in, gray and sullen—we heard it always. Far off, to the west, toward Bay-Bay, heavy sullen mountains shoulder out of a green density; they say there are bright cats there and pretty snakes. But I saw no life. I never saw even the skeletal claw of a crab on the shore, never saw the flirt of a fish's tail. Once I saw a Filipino woman with a great sea bird, an auk, its long beak tied with cord. Once in the dead jungle a flight of many hundreds of white parrots crashed aloft behind me. Once I saw a brilliant worm, striped with blue and vermilion. But the air is gray and heavy; the skies are gray and heavy; and the gray and heavy seas plash against the cocoanut wharves of the invasion. Dead. All dead.

NEXT DAY I had two interviews with Cornelio Bassa and with Knowles and Barzac.

My deal had two handles. Before I went on orders to go Stateside, I was supply officer of the group. I cleared the property book; that is, I turned into Base K everything for which I was responsible on the records, but I still had a supply room full of pyramidal tents, mess kits, field phones, typewriters, insect bombs, and medical kits—in brief, the litter of a general store, which was exactly what Bassa would make of it.

You remember the funny position we were in? My books were clear, and the motor haul to Tacloban was too tough for our last two six-by-sixes. I just couldn't turn in the excess. When the group left, it would be abandoned or dumped. The army forbade gift or sale, and yet the stuff would be given away or destroyed. Why not make something out of it? Why not indeed, argued Bassa. And he argued with a duffle bag full of 20 peso notes—100,000 pesos. I said no a half dozen times, a dozen times. Now I was going to say yes.

The other handle of the deal was this: Captain Knowles and Sergeant Barzac had a little arrangement at the air strip.

When *their* books were cleared, seven jeeps, a weapons-carrier, a four-by-four truck, three motor scooters, and a tent full of motor tools were left, along with 17,000 gallons of aviation gasoline. All this had been carried little by little to a clearing seven miles south, for delivery to Major Singko, if he met the offer. One day out shooting parrots I saw Knowles and Barzac in a weapons-carrier piled high under a tarpaulin. I simply walked into their deal—200,000 pesos split three ways.

Oh, it was easy to walk in, but Knowles and Barzac would surely arrange to have me carried out. Hence Bassa. I joined him at the little barrio of Rizal, west of the post.

"And how did you find Manila?" he asked. He'd learned a Spanish courtliness, and he had great personal power. It came, I think, from his reserve, from his utterly expressionless face, but most of all it came from an intelligence which roved everywhere with an easy flow and pinned down the fact with a phrase. He was six feet two or three, enormous for a Filipino, portly but straight, and I could not understand him. Perhaps we never really understand the slide of a familiar emotion over the planes of an alien face.

"Manila?" I asked. "Hot. Hot, shot-up, noisy, stinking, and crooked."

"To be sure," he said. "Crooked." Somehow he managed to convey that he joined me in our scheme but that also, from a higher plane of ethics, he very greatly deplored us both. He went on, "You have orders "

I showed him the forged orders: he naturally wanted a written conveyance, based on Army documents, a noose for my neck, and a protection of his title. His title would be worthless, orders or not, but with the orders to back him he was sure to be cleared by any military investigator heeding MacArthur's policy of bliss and rapture to the Philippines; and forged orders would clear me.

"Very good," he said, "very good." With an air nicely blending courtesy and disdain, yet a disdain which was inoffensive because by some inflection he aimed it also at himself, he unwrapped and handed me a woven basket. It contained two cans of Budweiser, a bottle of Cebu whisky, that remarkable gruel, and some rolls his daughter had baked.

"Please enjoy yourself," he said. I thanked him, and he went on, "And when shall we arrange matters?"

I asked, "One hundred thousand pesos when we sign?"

"Certainly, certainly, Captain. Certainly. Did we not agree, captain?"

"One thing more," I said.

He had suddenly an air of withdrawing utterly, while listening with courtesy and with care. "Yes?" he said. "One thing more?"

"Yes, one thing more. Two men must die."

"*Must* die, Captain?"

"*Must* die."

"And how are these two gentlemen to die, Captain?"

"Machine gun."

"And whose machine gun do you speak of, Captain?"

"Mine."

"And who will use your machine gun, Captain?"

"One of your men."

"Ah, one of *my* men. And who must be harmed by this gun, Captain?"

"Sergeant Barzac and Captain Knowles."

"Ah, Sergeant Barzac and Captain Knowles." He pondered amiably, as though over some trifle of his domestic budget. "True, true. No great pity. And yet, Captain, my man? A machine gun?"

"*Your* man, Bassa. *My* machine gun."

"We shall see, shall we not, Captain?"

"We'll arrange it now, Bassa."

"Now, Captain?"

"Now."

And we did.

The gymnasium door opened again and squeaked slowly closed. The loudspeaker droned away: "Mr. Nethersole, Mr. Nethersole, please report to the office of the membership secretary. Mr. Nethersole . . ." My friend idly tossed the bishop from hand to hand. His whole expression had changed. He had begun witth a light camaraderie and half defiance. Now he was more solemn, not alarmed, but dismayed, as though he watched the conduct of something which had used his body and his name and done these things, though in another world.

"At this point," he said, "I had an idiot feeling, a feeling I shall never have again, a feeling of utter tingling delight, a voluptuous feeling at my double or perhaps triple risk of death. Barzac and Knowles, of course, and now Bassa perhaps, and perhaps Major Singko, too. But I was happy, with an imbecile glee; I was more than happy; hazard foamed in me like wine.

I TALKED (he said), with Knowles and Barzac at the air strip. "I thought I wanted out," I said. "I thought I'd go Stateside and forget it all. But now I want in again. I have an LST off Bay-Bay. Singko can sail the ship and your supplies wherever he likes; the master has papers for anywhere."

"When?" Knowles said.

"Tonight. Why not clear it all up tonight."

I knew that Knowles and Barzac were through, but there they stood, heavy and solid, as though alive. And I am sure they knew that I was through, yet I stood there, heavy and solid, as though alive.

"Pretty smart, aren't you, Captain," Barzac said, finally.

"We'll see," I said. "We'll see."

They strolled off talking. I watched them draw a weapons-carrier and clatter off south, to see Singko.

At dark that evening Knowles and Barzac and I drove off in their weapons-carrier. In Rizal we picked up Bassa with his duffel bag—handsome duffel bag!—and two men. Seven miles south of the post, at the Bay-Bay fork, we left the carrier to follow a short-cut to the clearing. We said nothing; there was no sound anywhere. We walked over moist earth beneath a full and somber moon, a lonely moon.

What are the loneliest things on earth? The French say nothing is so lonely as the sound of a horn in the wood—the slow, silver horn, with nothing near. Who sounds, huntsman, who sounds? And the loneliest sound I ever heard was the piping music of a carnival in Vienna, Vienna desolate after the first war. The Ringstrasse—dead. The pleasure places—dead, and, I trust, haunted. Hope dead, and a world lying dead in the very air. At the north station I had a two hour wait for a train to Breslau, and so I sauntered in the sun, and nearby was a little traveling show, strong man, mindreader, and merry-go-round. Not a customer, but the little steam organ of the carrousel playing, playing, playing; playing in the sun, playing in dead Vienna, like a wail on the moon.

But is there anything more lonely than a full moon in a strange land? It shines on strangeness, yet it is the very moon which shines on home. It shines on the crocodile stink of Egypt, yet is seen in the cities of Ohio and glides over bleak Wyoming. In this Leyte night it shone on silent strangers, separate and solid, quite as though alive.

Beneath the moon, a quarter of a mile into the jungle, a natural pool ran along the path for several hundred feet. It glinted greenly beneath the moon, bubbly-foul, and I thought of Sergeant Thompson tumbling, splashing after the safe, of Sergeant Thompson and the doctor. When we came abreast of it, Bassa moved closer to me.

"Was the whiskey all right, Captain?" As he spoke he pressed the barrel of his body against mine, and I gave a little toward the water.

"Easy, Bassa. The whiskey—not so good. For the cakes I thank your daughter very much."

"And was the beer all right, Captain?" Again he pressed against me, as though to nudge some horrid understanding. My right foot gave way in the slick mire of the pool's edge, and I fell splashing in. I made a joke of it all, switched my drenched wallet from a hip to a breast pocket, and declared my happiness that I had no pocket watch to ruin. Bassa said nothing. No one said anything at all. They all stood silent beside the pool, and I still see them in the moonlight, their foreheads and noses bright, their eyes in great shadows.

"Clumsy of me, Captain," Bassa said. "Very clumsy, and I am very sorry. It is very fortunate that you had the Cebu whiskey; it will defend you against the devils of the swamp."

The pool was no more than breast deep anywhere, but steeply banked, so that I splashed two hundred feet or more before

I found a palm to grasp for a swing out of the slime. Silently we passed along the silent trail to the clearing and the vehicles. They stood parked at every angle, squatting among the gasoline drums like extinct animals among boulders; and suddenly I was aware of this Philippine night under this lonely moon. There was no sound, no insect drone, no clunk of frogs. Occasionally a mosquito buzzed by, brimming with malaria, but save for the squish of my shoes over the moist earth there was no noise. Nothing. Dead; dead; dead. And the moon was dead.

But the odd feeling of glee was with me still. I swelled out with a tonic exultancy. The feeling took my whole body; it was even sexual. The land lay dead, and perhaps others would soon lie dead, who had lately been alive, and I swelled with glee, like some shrewd horrid idiot.

We stood there in the moonlight, Bassa and his men, Singko and his squad, and Knowles and Barzac and I. The air tightened, and we all sensed it. We all spoke gravely, and we all moved slowly, so that the moon cast down shadows from us which did not jerk abruptly, but slid and pooled. We all seemed content to prolong this odd still moment; or perhaps no one wished to draw aside the curtain for this last act—an act by several dramatists, who had not conferred.

At last I said to Singko, "The LST is at Bay-Bay."

He nodded. "I have seen it," he said. Major Singko looked exactly like a Chinese ancient, short, meager, shrivel-faced, his chin dwindling away. He had one of those wispy beards the orientals grow. He wore a carbine in a shoulder sling and was belted with cartridges. I carried a .45. Barzac and Knowles carried carbines—faster-shooting than the Springfield, straighter than the .45—fine for the moonlight. Bassa and his men seemed unarmed.

I said, "Suppose we settle the whole thing now?"

"Why should we not," said Major Singko. He motioned to his sergeant, who brought forward a mildewed leather bag. He counted out the money, and Barzac and Knowles and I counted it again—fifty bank-wrapped packets of 20 peso notes; a heavy bag of 50 centavo pieces; and great scattered handfuls of loose notes, none larger than the purple 50 peso.

THE COUNT was right, and I settled the bag beside us and turned to Bassa. His face was cold and utterly alien in the moonlight. He gestured a little to his left; his nearest man turned smoothly to a jeep, reached below the front seat, and came toward us with a Thompson. He was not real in the moonlight; nobody stirred. The Thompson was set on single shot, and he shot Barzac once and Knowles once. Barzac fell over Knowles, both forward, with his left arm over Knowles' neck. He seemed affectionately to pull his ear. For a moment there was no stir; the echoes hammered briefly from the hills; far away a big bird in fright crashed through the trees.

Then a spasm of rage twisted the killer's face. He pushed the lever to full automatic, and the whole clip hammered into the dead bodies; they stirred a little with each slug, and Barzac's hand never left its embrace of Knowles. When the hammer clicked, the killer raised the gun like a spear and smashed it into Barzac's head; the barrel's end hit just above the right ear and smashed like a blunt spear into the skull.

He spat. "God-damned Americans," he said. "God-damned Americans. God-damned Americans."

Again we did not stir; the echoes died, and the last frightened bird settled once more to sleep. Again we were spectral and innocent actors, motionless in the moonlight upon a spectral stage.

"Suppose," I said to Bassa, "suppose we finish our business now."

"A good time to finish our business," he said gravely. "A good place, a very good place. And may I have your orders, Captain, and may I have your assignment of the property?"

I handed him both, and his man handed me the duffel bag.

"I won't trouble to count it," I said quietly.

"Ah, Captain, and do you indeed trust me so very well?" With great care Bassa folded my orders in four and tore them twice across and scattered the scraps in

the moonlight. "Excellent orders, Captain, excellent orders indeed, were they not?"

Again we all stood still. Bassa knew the orders were counterfeit, and Singko had not done whatever he had agreed with Barzac and Knowles to do. A little smile waggled Major Singko's beard, and he motioned to his sergeant. His sergeant raised his carbine toward me while everyone watched with a grave and tranquil attention. This was all most faithfully arranged, among the most agreeable of friends. How grave a breach of etiquette, how tactless, to disturb the scene in any way.

Then Bassa spoke. "Oh, Major Singko, one moment if you please." He moved slowly to Singko's side and spoke for a moment in rapid Tagalog. As they all listened a smile passed over each face, the smile of a gratified spectator. How charmingly the play proceeded! How exquisite the art of the playwright! The carbine fell to the sergeant's side, and Major Singko came toward me.

"There is your money, Captain," he said. "There is your money. Enjoy it, Captain. Enjoy it, if you please. Here it is."

"Enjoy it, Captain," echoed Bassa courteously from the shadow. The other men said nothing.

"There is your money, Captain," Singko said again, "and why do you not go away now? Surely we have little more to talk about."

"Yes, Captain," said Bassa. "It has all been very pleasant, and you have the money now, and will you not please go away?"

The leather bag in my left hand, the duffel in my right, I walked slowly to the trail and along it in the moonlight to the road. Dead; dead; dead; and a dead moon afloat in a strange land. I walked past the pond, green-silver in the moonlight.

Dead, all was dead. At the post the warrant officer lay asleep; he lay on his back, his arms folded on his chest, like an effigy on a crusaders' tomb. Little Jack was nowhere around; I never saw him again . . .

"Look!" came an eager voice. "Look here." One of the other players, acne-scarred, red-necktied, shrill, was standing by our board. "If you move the bishop here you threaten the rook; when the rook moves, you go down this file and . . ."

"Yes," my friend said, "but the game is over. I had the pieces at the end, but I lost."

Something still disturbed the youngster.

"But if the knight . . ." he began to splutter, but moved away.

My friend seemed to sense one question. "The money? What the devil did they care about the money, at least in pesos, and they had no way to change to dollars. There were pesos in every Flip pocket, stuffed in every Flip closet, wadded in every Flip bank. They loved the drama; they loved the climax. They paid me, just as they agreed to do, but they did not pay the *same* me that they had bargained with. Oh, the tale will last forever on Leyte."

I asked him, "When did you first notice it?"

"On the *Weigle*. Till then, everything went smoothly. Knowles and Barzac? Ah, that deadly Singko. The PX officer changed my pesos into hundred dollar bills. They made a fine brick to fit my foot locker; they filled a safety box at the Crocker National in Frisco.

"Everything went very nicely indeed. We were ten days out, past the flying fishes and into cooler weather when I felt it. I went to sick bay, and the doctor told me."

"Flukes?"

"Flukes. That damned pond. That damned Bassa." Then he smiled. "You know," he said, "I can't for the life of me decide which sounds better, filiariasis or liver flukes. Filiariasis—now there's a fine word; makes you proud to belong to a civilization with such words; makes you think of chrome clinics and goateed docs. Pretty fancy thing to have. But then, liver flukes; there's something homely and confiding about liver flukes, scampering about, you know, here and there, to and fro, back and forth.

"Well," he said, "let's play another game."

We played another game, and he lost that one, too.

The Man Who Would

ILLUSTRATED BY L. STERNE STEVENS

A FACT STORY

Jackson drew back the hammer, took deliberate aim again and fired.

Never Stay Thrown

By LOUIS A. SIGAUD

IT IS easy to believe that when Andrew Jackson was born, it was with a rough tongue already wagging and two clenched fists waving provocatively. For as child, youth, man, soldier, president and party chieftain, he fought lustily for the sheer joy of it as well as for the sake of cherished principle, and with a casual disregard for the amenities and rules of conflict that dismayed and usually routed his more conventional foes whether in hand to hand combat, on the battlefield, on the field of honor, or in the devious and enjoyable diplomatic preludes to war.

Reminiscing about "Old Hickory" as a lad, one schoolmate recalled that young Andy was from the start passionately fond of all sports akin to battle and above all of that body to body grappling

called wrestling. Being heavier and stronger than Andy, he admitted complacently that he usually threw the future president three times out of four but complained ruefully that to do so was of no avail for the irrepressible Andy "would never stay throwed," and would desist reluctantly only after winning a final fall. Wild, frolicsome, willful, mischievous, daring and reckless, the boy was intensely generous and loyal to his friends and to the weak he took under his wing. As to all else, he was passionately determined never to submit to a wrong nor to the will of an enemy, no matter how powerful.

Typical of his tendency to flame into avenging wrath was his youthful quarrel with old Colonel Waightstill Avery of North Carolina, his adversary in one of his first cases as a lawyer. Colonel Avery, who had befriended Andrew when he studied law, found occasion in the course of legal argument to ridicule in blunt pioneer phrases the legal position Jackson had adopted. Yielding promptly to his usual impulse to abandon verbal weapons for more lethal ones, the young lawyer, as soon as court adjourned, addressed a fiery challenge to his erstwhile friend. Colonel Avery, reluctantly obedient to the frontier code, accepted and was seconded by the noted John Adair who later was associated with Jackson and Burr in the later's proposed desent on Mexico and in 1815 ably commanded the Kentucky troops in Jackson's brilliant defense of New Orleans.

The two duellists met, fired at the word of command, missed and promptly renewed their friendship. Outwardly punctilious as this encounter seems to have been, it was evidently no more so than other occasions in Jackson's life where etiquette played a minor and even imperceptible role. Parton, one of his biographers, relates that during the engagement a humorous incident occurred which principals and seconds took pains thereafter to keep secret. When in later life a friend mentioned something about this duel, Jackson asked quickly, "Who told you?" The reply was, "General Adair." With a reminiscent smile, the general then queried, "Did he say what happened on the ground?" The answer being "No", Jackson reflected a moment, shook his head and said decisively, "Well then, I shan't!"

A LATER misunderstanding which began and ended much more like a brawl than a dispute between gentlemen was his set-to with formidable "Nolichucky Jack." This lusty personage, Governor John Sevier of Tennessee, was a perennial political and personal opponent and no more addicted than Jackson to subjecting normal combative impulses to the crippling fetters of a sedate and prosaic code of behavior. So when Jackson appeared on the scene one day in 1804 as Jack Sevier was haranguing a crowd in front of the Knoxville courthouse, "Nolichucky Jack", spontaneously abandoning business for pleasure, greeted the newcomer with a crackling outburst of vituperative welcome. Spiritedly, Jackson countered admirably in kind. When the crowd broke up into partisan bands anxious to come to grips, a wild altercation developed which threatened to end in an affray. During the wrangling, Sevier, touched on the raw by some of his enemy's keener shafts, repeatedly defied him to mortal combat. After cooler heads had intervened and the disappointed mob had been dispersed, Jackson, in accord with his foe on that one point, immediately dispatched a challenge to him.

Sevier accepted instantly, and their seconds attempted to set a time and place for the duel. The principals, however, were busy, impatient and headstrong men who soon found that they were unable, and probably unwilling, to agree on even such essential requirements. Jackson, exasperated, unjustifiably posted Sevier as a coward, and thereby made it certain that both men would draw to kill on sight. An agreement to do so was even reached, the understanding being that they were to meet at a stated time just over the border on the Bloody Ground (Kentucky). Impetuous Jackson was there on the dot, but "Nolichucky Jack", probably thinking it would infuriate his adversary, set out nonchalantly for their rendezvous more than two days later.

By a miracle of patience, Jackson managed to wait for forty-eight hours. Then, furiously, he lit out for Knoxville to seek Sevier and compel him to fight. En route he met a mounted group including "Nolichucky Jack" headed for the border. For once too overwrought to indulge in the pleasant profane preliminaries to action, Jackson leveled his cane like a lance, struck spurs to his horse and charged Sevier. The latter, who had started to dismount in order to fight on foot, was astounded by this move. Hurrying to free his foot from a stirrup, he stepped on the scabbard of his sword and fell prostrate and defenseless under his horse. The discomfited and frustrated general reined in his mount, but before he could plan his next step Sevier's friends had come between them. As usual, the unexpected then happened. Both men, probably because they possessed a keen sense of humor and realized that a fatal encounter would now be ridiculous, patched up their quarrel, rode back to Knoxville in amity and doubtles consumed together in honor of their momentary peace branch water suitably and adequately diluted.

While Jackson's personal differences of opinion with others kept him fairly busy, he always found both time and inclination to make a friend's quarrel his. Characteristic of this comradely spirit is the possibly apocryphal "tobacco box story" which Parton believes basically true, though somewhat embellished. The occurrence took place at the Clover Bottom race track outside of Nashville on an important racing day at which the general, then intensely interested in improving the breed of Tennessean fighting cocks and horses, was inevitably and conspicuously present.

An appropriate interval having been set aside for refreshment of man and beast, the immense and noisy throng milled about an outdoor table heaped with food which legend calmly asserts was full two hundred feet long. Here were seated those who had first felt the pangs of hunger and thirst, and at the head of the table sat General Jackson. The throaty roar of horse talk almost drowned out the accompanying clatter of busy knives and forks, but suddenly above both soared the unmistakable sound of tumult from the other distant end of the table, and aroused at least mild interest. As the commotion increased, a passerby coming oddly enough from that direction, remarked in the general's hearing and probably with deliberate intent, "They'll finish Patten Anderson this time, I *do* expect."

So intimate were Anderson and Jackson that to touch one was to wound the other, and so great was the general's trust in his crony that it was to him that he delegated in 1806 the confidential and delicate task of recruiting a company of seventy-five volunteers in the Nashville region for Burr's proposed invasion of Mexico. Hence, no sooner had the words been uttered indicating that Anderson was in danger than Jackson, galvanized into furious action, jumped to his feet and started to the rescue. But not along the encumbered ground.

Realizing that he could not make way through the dense crowd in time, the general leaped to the table and, wading through platters and dishes between the two rows of astounded diners holding their morsels of food in mid-air, headed for the scene of strife. Nearing it, he put his hand into a coat pocket, gently opened his tobacco box and then shut it with a loud, menacing click. The men attacking Anderson heard the significant sound and then a voice roaring, "I'm coming, Patten!" Looking up, they saw an enraged colossus striding toward them on the table-top, his right hand reaching meaningfully backward. In sudden panic, the bystanders cried out, "Don't fire!" and as Jackson jumped from the table to his friend's side, Anderson's assailants turned tail and fled.

IT WAS in 1806 that Andrew Jackson's mortal combat with Charles Dickinson occurred. Fatal in its outcome, the dispute between them developed with such an exchange of voluble letters privately and in the press and such a deluge of supporting affidavits on technical points that it seemed that the main intent was to spill ink rather than blood. And these paper weapons contained so much bluster that the principals at times

must have felt more like blustering Gascons than Tennesseans quietly concentrating on mayhem.

The trouble began in January when Dickinson, a well-known lawyer and considered the best man in Tennessee with a pistol, imbibed too freely and spoke disparagingly of Mrs. Jackson. Called to account by her husband, he pleaded in extenuation having been in liquor and was sternly warned not to repeat the offense. But he evidently did, the enmity between the two men grew and was soon aggravated by other issues.

General Jackson, owner of the famed Truxtun, had matched his horse against the noted Ploughboy, whose owner was Dickinson's father-in-law. For some reason Ploughboy was withdrawn and notes his owner had posted to make the match were forfeited. But a question arose as to whether time notes had not been substituted for the original notes payable at sight. In the course of spirited accusations and counter-accusations, Thomas Swann, a young lawyer and a friend of Dickinson, claimed General Jackson had called him "a damned lair" and called him to account.

The general in reply accused Dickinson of being behind Swann's attack, offered to "accommodate" Dickinson and emphasized this by adding, "Should anything herein contained give Mr. Dickinson the spleen, I will furnish him with an anodine as soon as I return." Then, meeting young Swann in a tavern, Jackson struck him a severe blow with his cane, stepped back to repeat the blow and fell backward over some chairs. When he arose, several gentlemen intervened and prevented the infliction of further punishment on Swann.

Dickinson, now brought into the open, wrote Jackson a venomous letter which ended, "I shall be very glad when an opportunity serves to know in what manner you give your anodines and hope you will take in payment one of my most moderate cathartics." But the writer then left town on a trip and pending his return, controversy centered on the question whether Jackson should have honored Swann's challenge. While the general's real motive had been to unmask Dickinson as the principal and bring him to account, this in itself was no justification for ignoring Swann's challenge and caning him. So General Jackson now argued in a long communication to the press that Swann, not being a gentleman, could not be met on the field of honor and attached to his letter affidavits of various friends and followers setting forth solemnly why Swann was obviously not a gentleman. The main assertion was that Swann, having learned that a certain gentleman might be in need of funds, had genteelly enough offered to lend him the desired sum but when later asked for the loan had replied that he no longer had the funds available.

A number of very touchy gentlemen having now made statements under oath which other equally touchy gentlemen were not only willing but eager to maintain were not so, a subordinate crop of quarrels started and one result was that two men, tiring of trial by letter, affidavit and abuse, resorted at last to trial by combat. They were John Coffee, Jackson's partner and intimate friend, and Nathaniel McNairy, who had also enjoyed Jackson's friendship. Unfortunately, McNairy, involuntarily firing before the word, wounded Coffee, and, guilty of one of the most serious violations of the dueling code, was promptly the center of another bitter dispute. Here the question was, should he have been shot down instantly by Coffee's second or permitted to live on in permanent disgrace?

Dickinson, returning to town on May 20th, brought the main issue to a head by another letter to the press in which he attacked Jackson at length and claimed the latter was too great a coward to administer an anodine. To the charge of cowardice, no merely verbal retort could be admissible or adequate. Jackson's challenge was immediately dispatched and promptly accepted. The duel was to be with pistols at twenty-four feet and, with McNairy's recent faux pas very much in mind, it was stipulated that if either principal fired before the word was given the aggrieved party's second was to shoot down the offender instantly.

The agreed date was May 30th and the rendezvous over the line in Kentucky. Dickinson set out first and amused himself with a little practice en route. Once,

at the word of command, he fired four bullets at a target twenty-four feet distant and lodged all in a space that could be covered by a silver dollar. Then, at the same distance, the Tennessean pistol expert fired several times at strings and severed one with each shot. After the last, he turned to the gaping tavern-keeper, pointed to a severed string and said nonchalantly, "If General Jackson comes along this road, show him *that!*"

Whether Jackson saw the impressive exhibit is not known. What is known, however, is that he and General Overton, his second, decided that to hit Dickinson he must take deliberate aim and so must take his foe's fire before getting off his own. This meant gambling that Dickinson, who could cut a string at twenty-four feet, would either miss completely or fail to score a hit good enough to prevent Jackson from firing effectively.

At the word, Dickinson fired. A puff of dust flew from the breast of Jackson's coat and Overton expected to see him fall. But the general slowly raised his left arm, placed it tightly across his chest and kept his pistol steady in his right hand. Dickinson, amazed at his apparent miss, and appalled by the ominous face and figure confronting him, unconsciously recoiled a pace or two. "Great God," he faltered, "have I missed him?" Overton, his hand moving to his own gun, cried out fiercely, "Back to the mark, sir!" Recalled to his senses, Dickinson stood to the peg and Jackson pulled the trigger. But no discharge followed for the hammer had stopped at half-cock.

While Dickinson, eyes averted, continued to stand firmly to the peg, Jackson drew back the hammer, took deliberate aim again and fired. A tremor shook his foe, who then reeled and fell into the arms of his friends. Stripping off his clothes, they found that the bullet had passed through the body below the ribs and had lodged above the opposite hip. Such a wound, they opined, could not fail to be fatal.

Jackson was now free to tend to his own wound but, unwilling to give Dickinson the satisfaction of learning that he had not missed, went off quietly as though unmarked. That night Dickinson bled to death. General Jackson's wound, painful and severe, healed but slowly and improperly for some of the intestines had been slightly displaced and so remained. Twenty years later this injury caused him renewed discomfort which continued for years and when he died the rumor ran, "Dickinson's bullet has killed Jackson at last!"

IN FACT, as long as General Jackson lived there were many who wondered and some who dared to voice their wonder whether Jackson, hit by his foe's fire, was justified in firing after he had failed to discharge his gun at the first attempt. Used as a political weapon the incident aroused as much controversy as the original quarrel and its bitterness was such that it doubtless caused Jackson as much mental anguish as Dickinson's bullet inflicted physical pain. So it is not surprising that when his friend Aaron Burr came that same year to Nashville to further their association in the proposed invasion of Mexico one element of their friendship rested firmly on Jackson's understandable sympathy for the ex-Vice-President of the United States who had been indicted in New Jersey and pilloried throughout the East for what political foes loosely termed Burr's "murder" of Alexander Hamilton in their duel at Weehawken in 1804.

Six years later, when the country was at war with both England and the Creek Nation, Jackson was busily preparing to play his historic roles in both conflicts. But when young Captain William Carroll, one of his numerous proteges, stirred up a hornet's nest among fellow officers, the energetic general gladly found time to back Carroll and thereby plunge characteristically into a feud of his own which to no one's surprise terminated in violence and bloodshed without benefit of the code duello.

Carroll, whose preferment in the militia by Jackson had played an important part in antagonizing other officers, was challenged by one of them. The youthful captain, courageous but reluctant to be drawn into a succession of duels, sought to avert trouble by claiming, as Jackson had said of Swann in 1806, that his challenger was no gentle-

man. This caused additional dissension and Carroll's enemies maneuvered so skillfully as to embroil him with impetuous Jesse Benton who promptly challenged Carroll. Jesse's standing was not only unimpeachable but it also seems clear that his entry into the quarrel was probably meant by those who egged him on to place General Jackson in an embarrassing and delicate position. For now not only was Jackson's protegé committed to fight, but his opponent was the brother of Thomas Hart Benton—then absent in Washington fighting desperately to straighten out his friend Jackson's entangled financial affairs and save him from bankruptcy. This development was bad, but the situation could become worse, and promptly did. Now Carroll, ostracized by most of his military associates, could get no one to act as second. So, as his enemies had doubtless intended, he begged his commanding general to stand by him.

The far-sighted general, reading all the portents correctly, replied that at the age of forty-six he was too old to act as a second. Thereupon Carroll, with the cleverness that later made him Governor of Tennessee, remarked with bitter finality that his enemies meant to run him out of the country. No more was needed to rejuvenate the momentarily aged Jackson, sweep away his good resolutions, and cause him to proclaim fiercely, "They shan't run you out of the country as long as Andrew Jackson lives in it!" Immediately he probed the very heart of the dispute, became convinced that Jesse Benton's feelings had been played upon to set him against Carroll and, oddly enough, sought to dissuade his subordinate from meeting the challenger. But the now resolute captain would not withdraw and as his second the general made arrangements for the duel.

Carroll, acting on his second's explicit instructions, allowed his foe to fire first. Jesse Benton missed and awaiting the return fire turned obliquely away from Carroll and assumed a crouching position. This, as Parton explained chastely, caused a portion of Jesse's anatomy that was always prominent to become more so and as a result Carroll's errant bullet inflicted a long raking wound on the part so imprudently exposed. Theoretically the original affront to Jesse Benton's honor had been wiped by the encounter, but in reality he now smarted even more from the indignity of the painful furrow across his buttocks. And for some reason he now held Jackson wholly accountable for everything.

Meanwhile, in Wasington loyal Tom Benton had extricated his friend Jackson from his financial difficulties and rushed exuberant word of his success to Tennessee. But his glad tidings passed en route fiery letters from his brother Jesse telling of the ludicrous outcome of his duel with Carroll and that Jackson, then depending on Tom for so much, had nevertheless counselled and seconded Carroll. Tom was outraged, denounced Jackson and accused him of causing the duel to be conducted in a savage, unequal, unfair and base manner. This original outburst was followed by other verbal asaults on the general who, reluctant to break with his benefactor and remembering suddenly how kind the parents of the Bentons had been to him in his raw youth, took the abuse for some time with exemplary patience. But his fiery temper soon slipped its leash and characteristically he announced publicly that he would horsewhip Tom Benton on sight.

Tom, to whom the threat was relayed, did not allow it to deter him from going to Nashville, but once there he took a prudent step compatible with honorable conduct by stopping with his brother at the City Hotel instead of at the nearby Nashville Inn where he and Jackson usually put up when in town. In this way he would neither avoid his former friend nor seek him out and the responsibility for any provocative action would rest upon the general. Tom and Jesse had hardly reached the City Hotel on September 3, 1813 when it came strangely to pass that General Jackson and his partner Colonel Coffee got to town and took rooms at the Nashville Inn. What they had come to town for seemed evident to all, but when Colonel Coffee was asked he replied with a disarming grin that they had merely come to Nashville to pick up their mail at the post office. Heeding the grin more than the words,

some listeners recalled that the post office was just beyond the City Hotel.

THE next morning about nine o'clock Jackson and Coffee started for the post office, the former visibly equipped to handle his mail with a riding whip and a small sword. Taking a diagonal approach to the post office, the two friends passed at a suitable reconnoitering distance from the City Hotel and were not at all srprised or disconcerted to see Tom Benton in that establishment's doorway looking daggers at them. John Coffee turned to his companion and said softly, "Andy, do you see that fellow?" "Oh, yes," replied the general coolly, "I have my eye on him." And on they went to the post office where there were indeed some letters with which they set out on their more meaningful return trip. This time they walked straight down the sidewalk leading past the door where Tom Benton stood. As they neared him they noticed Jesse Benton standing by.

When Andrew Jackson came opposite Tom Benton, he turned toward him, brandished his whip in his right hand and roared, "Now, you damned rascal, I am going to punish you. Defend yourself." Tom raised his hand and seemed to fumble for a weapon in his breast pocket. Then Andrew quickly drew a pistol from a back pocket, leveled it at Benton who recoiled a pace and then, as Jackson advanced steadily upon him, continued backward through the hotel corridor and down a rear piazza.

Jesse Benton, hurrying after them, entered the hotel passage. Seeing his brother menaced by Jackson's gun and apparently about to be shot, he drew his own pistol loaded with two balls and a large slug and fired. One ball entered the thick part of Jackson's left arm and buried itself near the bone. The slug struck the left shoulder and shattered it horribly. Andrew Jackson pitched headlong across the doorway.

John Coffee, hearing the shot, ran into the hotel and seeing the general outstretched at Tom Benton's feet concluded the latter had shot him. Rushing on Tom Benton, Coffee drew his gun, fired and missed. He then sought to strike with his clubbed gun but Benton, moving backward, fell down an unnoticed flight of stairs behind him.

Coffee turned back to assist his wounded comrade. And now a young and muscular giant dashed into the hotel, armed with a swordcane. A glance at Jackson bleeding on the floor and at Jesse Benton holding a gun told Stokeley Hays what had happened. Snatching the long and glittering blade from his cane, Mrs. Jackson's nephew, who seven years earlier had gone down the Mississippi with Burr as Jackson's confidential agent, went into action. Frantically he lunged at Jesse with terrific force. But the sharp point struck a coat button, the slender blade doubled back on itself and snapped into pieces. Hays then drew a dirk, hurled himself furiously at Jesse and bore him to the floor. Holding him down with one hand, he raised the dirk in the other and sought to plunge it into Jesse's breast. But his intended victim seized the coat cuff on the striking arm and so hampered his assailant that the dirk merely pierced his left arm. Hays, striving madly to disengage his weapon, inflicted additional flesh wounds on Jesse Benton and finally tore his cuff free. Again he raised the dirk and brought it down to bury it in Jesse's heart. But a bystander caught the descending arm and before another blow could be struck other persons had intervened and the irate Bentons, the wrathful Coffee and the maddened Hays were prevented from resuming hostilities.

Tom and Jesse Benton, not realizing how severely General Jackson had been wounded, clamored that he was "an assassin" and defied him to renew the battle. But confined to bed for three weeks he was at least momentarily unable to oblige them. Several physicians had been called to attend him and all but one urgently recommended amputation of his left arm. His own terse and emphatic decision was, "I'll keep my arm," and in it he also retained for twenty years the bullet from Jesse Benton's gun.

Ten years later Tom Benton and Andrew Jackson, representing Missouri and

(Continued on page 128)

"You!" roared McCoy. "It costs money to run this rig. If you can't make hole, we'll get a driller who can."

DEEP HOLE

By

CLIFTON ADAMS

I GUESS you could say it all started with a letter. The one I picked up in a plank shack we called a post office there in Venezuela. It was from a drilling contractor of the World Oil Company, named Hagan. I'd never heard of him before—but he must have known me, because what he wanted was for me to come back to the States and take a drilling job on a deep test they were putting down in Oklahoma.

I'd been in Venezuela a year. I'd fought mosquitoes, waded the swamps, and climbed the mountains. I was ready to

ILLUSTRATED BY
EARL EUGENE MAYAN

go home. By return mail I wrote this contractor Hagan to let him know that he'd just hired a driller, and started packing.

The whole set-up looked fine. I was going home, and I was going to have a hand in sinking what they hoped to be the deepest well in the country. But when things look that good you want to be very careful, there's always going to be a catch.

There was one this time, like always. After I made it to Oklahoma City I got mildly curious and glanced through the oil section of a *Daily Oklahoman* to see if there was somebody on the job that I knew.

There was. It was in the middle of the page in small print and it would probably have taken anybody else the best part of a day to find it. It jumped out at me like a well heading. *World Johnson deep test. . . Spade McCoy pushing World tools in Red Rock.*

To most people that wouldn't be a piece of news to lose any sleep over. It meant the World Oil Company was drilling a deep test well on some land owned by a Mr. Johnson in the Red Rock district of Oklahoma. The part that almost made me turn around and grab the first banana boat back to Venezuela was the geezer pushing tools on that job, Spade McCoy.

Tool pushers *can* be nice guys. They can take charge of their three or four wells and see that supplies keep coming in and the men keep working, and let it go at that.

There's that special kind of tool pusher, and there's the Spade McCoy kind. Trying to set a record on every well he has. Yapping at drillers when they hit hard limestone and don't make enough hole to suit him. I was already getting an idea what kind of job this was going to be, when he was out to sink the deepest hole in the country.

I guess I should have followed my first impulse and lit out again for the jungles. But there are such things as black lists among drilling contractors, and I like to eat as well as the next man. I told myself, what the hell, a job's a job, and anyway, McCoy probably wasn't as bad as the story had it.

FROM Oklahoma City I caught a bus that they save back for trips like that and rattled over thirty miles of washboarded clay to Red Rock.

There were a few wooden buildings on either side of the road, mostly hotels and beer joints, and that was the town. A bartender told me where the World office was. A tired-eyed clerk in the office told me I could catch the crew truck going out for the noon tour.

That's what I did. Me and a half dozen roughnecks crashed over another five miles of that red clay. But finally we made it. I guess to most people it wouldn't have been worth the trip—but with an oil man it's different.

It's a sight that makes an oil hog feel all big inside, a rig like that. It was sitting out on a bald prairie where there wasn't a tree in sight that would reach higher than a man's waist. Hundred, seventy-eighty feet high. Sixteen or seventeen stories of clean laceworked steel. The engine was a big steam job that would pee-wee the biggest locomotive I ever saw. But that's the kind of set-up you've got to have if you figure to juggle two or three miles of heavy drill stem.

Anyway, big. A derrick built to sink a deep hole, maybe the deepest. After I'd got my fill of looking at it I made my way around a big outsized slush pit and up to the derrick floor.

I stood there and looked while the new crew came on, and watched the driller. He was kind of a youngish guy. He didn't look so very big at first, but that was because he was put together so well that you didn't notice it. He had kind of a tight mouth that wouldn't be saying very much, and a short nose that wouldn't be in other people's business all the time.

I walked over to where he was and said, "The tool pusher, Spade McCoy—do you know where I'd find him?"

He wiped his hands on a pair of oily khakis and looked at me.

"Down at the number two well, I think. That's about three miles down the road." He had a pair of blue, business-like eyes. They didn't tell me much.

"My name's Bob Horne," I said. "I was contracted as one of the drillers on this job. I would have been here at the

start but I just left a hole in Venezuela and it took a little time to get here."

The driller grinned. He didn't look to be more than a kid when he did that. He stuck out a hand, took mine and started wrecking it. "Bob," he said, "you don't know how glad I am to see you. I signed on as substitute driller until you got here. Now I can go back to being a derrick man and leading a peaceful life."

I didn't get it. Most men his age would give a month's pay to drill on a rig like that. But not this one. He wasn't kidding when he said he was glad to see me. He went on crushing my hand and looking me over. "Joe Hillman's the name," he said. "The boys here call me 'Little Joe.' Not because I'm little, it's just that I look that way up against McCoy."

He turned loose of my hand and I looked at him carefully while I rubbed some feeling back in it. I guessed he was about an inch taller than I was. That made him six feet. I'd outweigh him by ten pounds maybe, so that would set him at 195. Not very little. I wondered what kind of man this Spade McCoy was.

I didn't have to wonder about that for long. I saw one of the company sedans rattle off the main road and head for the derrick. "Little Joe" Hillman looked at the car and then at me. He had that closed-mouth look again and he wasn't grinning.

"There's McCoy now," he said. He threw the switch that put the big steam engine to work and took the weights off the draw works brake. "It's time to start making hole. Spade is a great guy for making a lot of hole and he doesn't want any excuses."

I saw what he meant. Some of the roughnecks had been loafing over on the lazy bench, having a cigarette before going to work. Suddenly the lazy bench was empty. There's not much for a roughneck to do unless you're running drill stem in the hole, or coming out with it. But they were busy anyway. Doing everything but mopping the derrick floor.

I began to see the reason for it when McCoy got out of the car. It was an average-sized sedan, the kind where three people can ride comfortably in the front seat—so the advertisements say. The advertisements hadn't counted on men like Spade McCoy. The car was too small for just him—but then, any other car would have been too. He hunched down and pushed himself away from the steering wheel and got out. When he got all unwound, he stood flat-footed and glared at the car like he might pick it up and throw it in the slush pit.

I guess he decided against it. He let it go with just slamming the door hard enough to cave the side in, then he started toward the well looking like a mad bull. He stopped long enough to catch a handful of mud returns as it poured out of a pipe into the slush pit. He worked the stuff between his fingers, smelled of it, and thought about it. Then he flung the stuff down, wiped his hands on his pants and cussed.

The derrick didn't seem so big with him around. The Grand Canyon wouldn't either. He took the steps leading up to the derrick floor four at a time and stood there, glowering.

He looked as big as a four room house and about as soft as a block of cement. There wasn't any neck to speak of. His head just sat on some shoulders that must have been copied from a walking beam. I was beginning to see how Joe Hillman got the name of "Little Joe."

After he got through raking the place over, McCoy fixed a pair of steel eyes on Joe Hillman and let out a bellow to rattle the rig-irons.

"You! That's the same sand you were in twelve hours ago. It costs money to run this rig, a lot of money. If you can't make hole, we'll get a driller who can."

HE CAME across the derrick floor and pushed his face down close to Hillman's. It didn't seem to bother Hillman any more than any other unpleasant sight would. He reached back, hung the weights back on the brake and let the rotary idle. "That's right," he said easily. "The same sand, hard limestone, and we'll probably be in it for another twelve hours. Anyway, I'm just one of the crew now." He nodded his head over in my direction. "Your new driller, Mr. Horne."

McCoy wheeled around and glared at me. I made my way around the rotary table and stuck out my hand, and said,

"I've heard a lot about you Mr. McCoy. You've sunk some fine wells."

He looked at my hand like he might tear it off and throw it in my face. But he didn't. He just grabbed it, crushed it, and shoved it back.

"It took you long enough to get here," he growled. "We spudded in a month ago. What contractor was idiotic enough to hire a man in Venezuela for a job in Oklahoma?" He didn't really want an answer so I didn't bother giving him one. "What do you know about this job?"

"Just that it's a test well. The contractor didn't tell me much."

"Yeah, that's right. A deep one." Here was a man who liked to do big things, bigger than anybody else had ever done. It was in his eyes, in his voice. So there wouldn't be any doubts, he put it into words. "Deep," he said again. "We're not looking for oil. Any oil sands we hit we'll mud up and keep going. Eighteen thousand feet. If we're lucky, twenty. When we're through, the geological exploration boys can take over. Do you know what that means?"

"I've got an idea," I said.

"It means they can find out things they never heard of about this country. It. . ." He caught himself before he started preaching. Sometimes oil men are like that, and Spade McCoy was an oil man. Any man is who can tell you what sand you're in from feeling of a handful of mud. For just a minute he lost some of that hard look—but he got it back without any trouble at all.

"Well, that's all," he said. "You can get all the dope from the office in town. You can get the feel of the rig today, tomorrow you go to work on the noon tour." With that, he turned and marched down the steps and away from the derrick. I watched him squeeze back into the sedan, gun the motor and rattle off across the field.

"So that's Spade McCoy," I said.

Joe Hillman looked at me and then turned back to the draw works. "Mister, that's Spade McCoy," he said tightly. "And you're welcome to him."

I didn't let it bother me too much. I'd worked with some tough men. Maybe not the size of Spade McCoy, but tough just the same. So I hung around the rig like he said, just to get the feel of things.

Joe Hillman didn't have much more to say. He just worked on the draw works like he had a grudge against it, pushing that string of drill tools for everything they would stand.

That wouldn't bother most people, but it can drive a driller crazy. I was scared to death he was going to push too hard and twist off the stem, and that would leave me with the job of fishing a mile of drill pipe out of the hole. I stood it for an hour, and then I had to get away. I decided to let the next day take care of itself.

I caught the next crew truck into Red Rock. By sundown I'd got my name on the payroll in the front office and started looking around for something to do. Red Rock was like most oil towns. You can sleep, or you can drink. I looked around until I found what seemed to be the noisiest beer hall and went in.

It wasn't much of a place. A long bar and a brass foot-rail and you're set up for business in an oil town.

I guess I was on my fourth batch of suds when Joe Hillman came in. He looked like he'd been in a train wreck. His shirt was torn, his hair strung down in the one eye that was open—the other one was the color of ripe plums and swollen tight. His lips were swollen too, and some blood had dribbled from the corner of his mouth onto his shirt. For a minute he reeled in the doorway, then he got hold of himself and made it over to the bar.

I was getting a pretty good hunch what had happened. It's not healthy to ask questions at a time like that, but I guess I'm not very smart. I moved down the bar to where he was and said, "You look like you've had a rocky time, kid. Let me get us some suds and move over to one of the booths."

He gave me a look like he was trying to decide whether to punch me in the nose or just pretend I wasn't there. I let him work on it for a while and got the beers anyway. After a while he nodded and followed me over to one of the booths against the wall.

After he'd downed about half the suds he looked a bit better. "You're wondering what happened," he said finally.

"Well, there's no secret about it, it'll be all over town in another hour. I twisted off the stem. Lost a string of tools a mile long in that hole. Mr. McCoy didn't like it. We. . ." He tried a grin but it didn't come off so good. "We had some words."

I just sat there. I didn't yell or scream or hit him with a beer mug, but it wasn't because I didn't want to. A mile of drill stem lost! That meant a fishing job and a fishing job's never any fun. Lot's of time they don't do any good anyway. I could see how Mr. McCoy would be put out by it—losing his chance to set a record with the deepest well in the country. That's something an oil man dreams about.

Joe Hillman saw what I was thinking and he wasn't happy about it. He was an oil man too, and he wanted a hand in that well as much as anybody. Maybe more. Sometimes things like that mean more to kids than to old hands like me.

He didn't say anything, but his face told me how he felt. He'd do a lot to get back on that job. Anything. But it wouldn't do any good, not with a man like McCoy. A pipeliner would stand a better chance getting through the Pearly Gates.

"You want to tell me about it?" I said.

He shrugged again, as if he was trying to tell himself it wasn't important. "McCoy wanted more hole, so I was making it for him. I was pushing pretty hard . . ." He waited a minute and looked at me. "But not that hard. I know what a string of tools will take. Any driller does."

I waited while he tried to find some more words.

"That's about all. There must have been a flaw in the drill stem."

It was a weak story. Though it happens sometimes, a flaw in the drill stem—but Spade McCoy wouldn't be the kind of man to swallow it. I felt sorry for the kid. A job like that meant a lot to him. That was showing more on his face.

But there was nothing I could do. I gave him a slap on the shoulder and told him there were more jobs, but I knew it didn't do any good. People don't jump at the chance to hire drillers who lose tools. I left him sitting there staring at the empty beer mug and went to my hotel.

THE KID had fouled it up, all right. When I got out to the job the next day there was a bunch of experts standing around doing a lot of talking about what ought to be done. But nobody was doing much except Spade McCoy. He was cussing and looking like he might beat the whole crew's brains out with a drill bit if they didn't get that string of pipe out.

The cussing didn't help much. We lowered a bunch of fancy fishing tools that the experts had brought out, but they didn't do any good. It looked like the broken end of the drill pipe was buried in the side of the hole. We couldn't get to it with over-shots or any of the other tools we had, so Spade said take a picture of it. Lower an impression block in the hole, pound it down around the jammed pipe, and when we pulled it out maybe we'd have an idea what it looked like down there.

So that's what we did. When we brought the impression block up the experts looked wise and said they knew just what we needed and they headed for the closest bit shop to have it made.

Three weeks later they were still looking wise at that impression block and making more fishing tools, and the pipe was still in the hole. Spade McCoy was fit to be tied. What time he wasn't cussing the experts he was cussing Joe Hillman. I couldn't blame him much. He'd already lost a chance to set any kind of drilling record, but that wasn't all. At the end of the third week the company sent word that if he didn't get the pipe out and start drilling within another seven days they would have to abandon the well.

That week wasn't any fun. We all found out then where Spade McCoy got his name for toughness. He must have slept sometimes, but nobody caught him at it. He was there waiting for every tour as it came on and he rode and cussed them until they went off.

More than once I thought about quitting the job. But I guess the same thing kept me there as it did the rest of the crew. The well. Maybe once in a lifetime, if you're lucky, you get a chance to work on a well like that, and oil men

just weren't walking out on the chance.

I guess that was what kept Joe Hillman in Red Rock. He didn't have any other reason that I could see. Job, friends, or anything else. All the oil men were down on him—except me maybe. I don't know where he spent his days, but every night he'd be waiting for me in the beer hall what I got off tour. Every night he'd ask the same thing. "How'd it go today?"

And I'd have the same answer. "No good." We'd have a few beers but there wouldn't be much talk. He'd sit and brood like that well was a child or something that he'd kicked out in the cold to let die. He didn't mention Spade McCoy any more, all he seemed to think about was the well he'd fouled up.

Along the last of the week it got bad. I guess Spade couldn't help it, but his bullying and cussing wasn't doing any good and it was driving the drilling crew nuts. We had two days to go and they were no closer to getting that pipe out of the hole than at first. That was the day I came into the beer hall and found Joe Hillman sweating with pencil and paper in one of the booths.

I got a beer and went over to say hello. He didn't even look up. He had that paper messed up with more diagrams, angles, and dotted lines than a carload of blueprints. He motioned for me to sit down, then he scribbled a minute longer and looked up.

"I think I've got it," he said. "If I can get a look at that impression they took I'd know."

I said, "Got what?" I wasn't very interested.

"A fishing tool to get that drill stem out. Of course I can't tell until I have a look at that impression. Did they make a drawing of it?"

I figured the strain had been too much for him and he'd cracked a little. You can't tell about people like that. I decided to humor him. "Yeah," I said carefully. "It's in the dog house out by the derrick. Why?"

"Could you get it?"

"If I wanted Spade McCoy to kick my face in, I could try."

He ignored the first part of my speech completely and said, "I'll have to have it tonight. Tomorrow's the last day the well's got and it will probably take me the rest of the night and tomorrow morning to get the tool made."

I know it's a waste of time to argue with crazy men, but I thought this was the time to give it a try anyway. "Even if this tool of yours would work," I said, "do you think Spade McCoy would let you get close enough to the well to try it out?"

That stopped him for a minute. It's hard to believe, but that hadn't crossed his mind before. He hadn't given Spade McCoy a thought. It stopped him, but just for a minute.

"McCoy won't stop me," he said.

He almost made me believe it. I guess that kind of craziness is catching. Anyway, I listened to him for a while and the first thing I knew I'd got a company car and was on my way back to the well. It was easier than I'd expected—I'd just forgot some stuff I'd left in my work clothes and come back for it. I wrapped the impression sketch up in a pair of dirty overalls and lit out for town before anybody could ask questions.

Joe Hillman was waiting for me when I got back. He grabbed the bundle out of my arm and hustled me back to the booth where we could have a look. He had a long one, he studied the drawing from all angles and every once in a while he would make some more marks on his paper. After a while he wrapped the sketch up again, gave it to me and let out a lot of air that he'd been holding for a long time.

"That'll do it," he said. "There'll be a few changes, but I think it'll work."

"Just like that," I said. "Fishing experts work on it for three weeks and get nowhere, and just like that you've got the answer."

He spent a few seconds wondering how I could be so stupid, then he decided it wasn't worth worrying about. "I like oil wells," he said. "I like all oil wells, but that one more than any. Does that make some kind of sense?"

I guess it did at that.

"I know every bolt and rig-iron in the derrick, and every stand of pipe in the hole. . ." He didn't go on. There wasn't any use to. We both knew what he

meant. Some people feel that way about oil wells. I did, Joe Hillman did—I guessed that Spade McCoy did too.

I LEFT Joe Hillman there in the beer hall with his figuring and went to the hotel to get some sleep. I had a feeling I was going to need it. I didn't see him again until the next day; he was waiting out in front of the hotel in a rattletrap truck that must have been the first Ford made after he quit the T. The back end looked like it was sitting square on the axle, but I saw what caused that after I got a closer look.

On the back end was the queerest shaped thousand pounds of iron I ever saw. Grabs, dogs, prongs, spears—it looked like all the fishing tools ever made wrapped into one.

It wouldn't work. That was the first thing I thought when I saw it. But when I got a look at Joe Hillman's face I didn't have the heart to tell him so.

"I finished it about an hour ago," he said. "When your tour goes on we'll take it out and try it. If we're lucky, Spade McCoy won't be there. If we're not lucky, well. . ." He just looked at me, and somehow or other, I knew that we'd try it anyway.

It was almost an hour before my tour went on, but in that truck of Joe Hillman's we would need it. He wound it up and we crawled out of town and onto the country road that led to the well. That freakish fishing tool rattled around on the back end like it was going to crash through any minute. I wouldn't have cared much if it had.

But it didn't. We crashed off the main road and started across the field just as the morning tour was ready to quit. It looked like we were in luck. Spade McCoy wasn't around so we pulled up next to the well and had the crew help us get that hunk of iron up to the derrick floor. They gave us a lot of funny looks, but I was supposed to be the boss, when McCoy wasn't around, so they did it.

It looked like we were going to get away with it. We pulled up the drill pipe the other crew had been fishing with, took the tool off and put the one on that Joe Hillman had made. The rest of the crew looked at it and didn't say a thing. If we wanted to play, it was all right with them. It looked like this was the last day of the job anyway.

We got the thing in the hole and I turned the draw works over to Hillman. He would know more about that baby of his than I would. He ran it all the way down to the broken pipe and made his first grab before I noticed the sedan pull off the road and head toward the derrick.

It was the same sedan I had seen that first day. It pulled up close to the derrick, the door opened and Spade McCoy got out. He looked tired. He stared at the well like an old man saying goodbye to a friend that he knew he wouldn't see again. Then he started up the steps to the derrick floor.

When he first saw Hillman he didn't say a thing. Suddenly the tiredness went out of his face and hardness took its place. He fixed his eyes on Hillman—there wasn't another man on the floor as far as McCoy was concerned—then he started across the oil-soaked boards, his big fists doubled in bony clubs.

There was the man who had fouled his well up. Right in front of him. And Spade McCoy knew what to do about it. He didn't say a thing, he just kept coming, those big fists ready.

Joe Hillman waited until it was a matter of a few feet between them before he moved. Then he jerked his head at me and motioned at the draw works. "It's up to you now. Take over."

I grabbed the brake and Joe Hillman stepped out to meet McCoy with his hands down. That was a mistake.

He got a big-knuckled fist in the mouth that made a splat that could be heard over the growl of the engine. He staggered back, grabbed at the derrick for support, and then pushed himself out. He had his hands up now. He shoved his left in hard and caught McCoy on the side of the head. That was no way to hurt a man like McCoy. He shed the fist like water and kept coming.

The drilling crew backed up to the edge of the derrick-floor and watched. There wasn't anything else to do. I didn't figure Joe Hillman had a chance, but it had been his idea so I let him play it out.

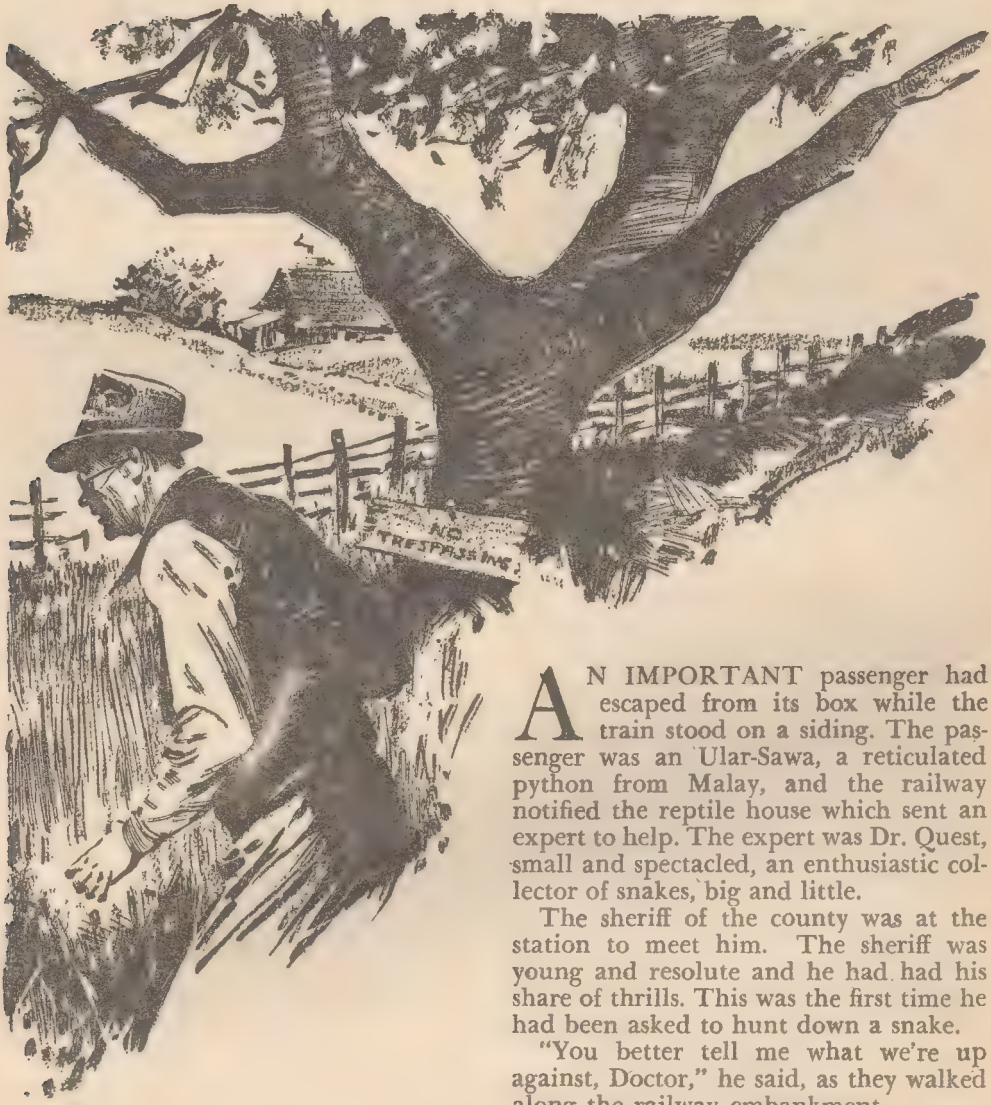
(Continued on page 126)

MORE VENOMOUS

ILLUSTRATED BY
FRANK KRAMER

OF THE TWO

By D. K. FINDLAY



It came at them hissing, with eyes as red as coals, and he fired again.

AN IMPORTANT passenger had escaped from its box while the train stood on a siding. The passenger was an Ular-Sawa, a reticulated python from Malay, and the railway notified the reptile house which sent an expert to help. The expert was Dr. Quest, small and spectacled, an enthusiastic collector of snakes, big and little.

The sheriff of the county was at the station to meet him. The sheriff was young and resolute and he had had his share of thrills. This was the first time he had been asked to hunt down a snake.

"You better tell me what we're up against, Doctor," he said, as they walked along the railway embankment.

"The reticulated python, *Pythoninae reticulatus*," said Dr. Quest, "is the king of the big constrictors. They sometimes attain a length of thirty feet. This particular fellow is about twenty-five feet and a fine specimen. If you've seen a snake charmer looping a snake about her shoulders, it was probably a python—but not

reticulatus. He doesn't permit familiarities; he's the boss of everything in the jungle. Right now this chap is in bad humor after being captured and handled and shaken by the train. They won't eat after they are captured. This fellow hasn't eaten for more than a month."

"What do they eat?"

"Small mammals—wild pig, antelope. A good big *reticulatus* will swallow a 200-pound deer."

"Will they kill a man, Doc?"

Dr. Quest was reluctant to give an opinion on that. "They've been known to take native children. They're constrictors, you know, they kill by squeezing. A python of this size could easily overpower a man if sufficiently roused—" He stopped and pointed. "There's his trail."

THE snake had gone down the embankment, through a fence and into the long grass. The grass was flattened as if someone had dragged a boat through it. The sheriff wished he had brought his Winchester. He wasn't used to the thought of reptiles that left a track like a country lane.

"How do you figure on handling him?"

"First we find out where he is. He'll look for water and lie up near it. Then we'll get him to kill if possible—a pig or chickens. If he kills, he'll be quiet for a time. These big chaps lie in the water for a week after feeding. Then we'll get a few men and grab him and put him in a box."

The sheriff admired Dr. Quest's nerve.

"Doc, you'll need a warrant to get anybody round here to go near a snake of that size. In this county, a snake is something you kill as quick as you can and don't even touch when they're dead. But if you're game to grab him, I'm game to hang on, too."

"There's nothing much to it," said Dr. Quest. "I'll look after his head. The main thing is to get him straightened out so he can't use his coils. And, of course, you have to watch out for his spurs."

"His spurs?"

"Yes. The vestiges of his hind legs. All that's left of them on the outside is a pair of horny points on his abdomen, but they can give you a nasty scratch."

They climbed the fence and followed the trail across a meadow. It was heading directly for a big swamp. The doctor pointed to the trees where a branch had been freshly broken. "There's his mark. He went in there."

"How can you tell?"

"By the broken branch. It snapped under his weight. He weighs about 300 pounds, you know."

They came to the swamp, a tangled growth of willows and alder, with a shallow creek meandering through. The edge of it was guarded by a barbed wire fence.

"This is good," said Dr. Quest. "This is the sort of place he likes."

The sheriff looked along the barbed wire studded with "No Trespassing" signs.

"Doc, I hate to tell you this, but he couldn't have picked a worse place. This is Rufe Golas' place. He's the meanest man in the county. He don't allow no one on his land, no one."

"This is different," said Dr. Quest confidently. "We can't leave an Ular-Sawa lying about. Too dangerous. We must either recapture him or destroy him—which I would hate to do. We'd better go and tell Mr. Golas about it."

"We can try, but it won't do any good," said the sheriff. As they walked back to the car, he told Dr. Quest about Golas. "I was at his place last week. We got a community phone line here, belongs to us all, and the surveyors wanted to take it across his land. He ordered them off. I went down to reason with him and he said if he caught me on his land, he'd plug me."

"He doesn't get along with his neighbors?"

"Doc, I'll bet there's more human feeling in that big snake of yours than there is in Golas. When he was young, he was breakin' a colt and the colt kicked him and bust his leg. First thing he did when he was up was to take a chain and beat that colt to death. He's a reg'lar terror to his stock. The neighbors got worked up over the way he beat and starved and they had the law on him. Then the ones that took the lead against him had some bad fires. So now folks just leave him alone."

"Has he any family?"

"One girl. His wife died years ago, just worn out. The girl would be a nice kid, if she had a chance—but she never has a chance. Never got to school after she was fourteen, never had a decent dress. She does a man's work round the place."

They drove down the highway and came to the Golas' home, an old gray house and worn-out buildings. Chickens ran squawking from the wheels and a girl in blue jeans working at the woodpile put down her axe and looked at the. She was pale, with the empty look of the unwanted, and Dr. Quest pitied her.

"Your dad around, Jeanie?" asked the sheriff.

A man appeared in the doorway, a man with dark, hating face and a crooked body.

"I told you to stay away from here, Evers."

Dr. Quest got out of the car.

"The sheriff is here at my request. My name is Quest and I'm from the Zoological Society. One of our big snakes escaped in transit and we have traced him to your swamp. I'd like your permission to go after him. I'd like your help, too. Of course, we'll pay you for your trouble."

Golas looked at him, hard-faced.

"I don't care who you are or what you are. Get off my land and stay off."

"You don't understand," said Dr. Quest. "The snake is a *reticulatus*—"

"If I find a snake in my swamp, I'll knock him on the head with a club. I don't need any help from strangers." He addressed the sheriff. "You listen to me, Evers. If I catch you sneakin' and spyin' round my place, I'll shoot—and that tin star of yours won't stop me. Now get out!"

Dr. Quest made one more attempt.

"No use, Doctor," said the sheriff. "Let's go."

They drove back to the highway. Dr. Quest accepted the rebuff philosophically. "I'm used to unreasonable people. Many people are unreasonable about snakes. I've talked to farmers who were losing their eggs to rats and yet insisted on killing every rat snake about the place. I've shown them the snake stomachs—with rats and no eggs—but they still wouldn't believe me. You have to be patient with them."

"What are you going to do now?"

"Go right ahead, of course. I can't leave the snake to roam the country. He might start a panic. I wish I could be sure that he hasn't left the Golas place."

There was a country road running along the other edge of the swamp. They drove slowly along, looking for signs, and finding none.

"That's all right," said Dr. Quest with satisfaction. "He's still in there. Probably curled up in the roots of one of those big willows. Now sheriff, I'll tell you what I intend to do. I'm going to get a couple of pigs somewhere and tonight I'll bring them here and drive them into the swamp. I hope he'll kill one. At dawn tomorrow, I'll slip in and try to locate him. I won't ask you to come with me for you are an officer of the law, and I intend to commit a trespass."

"I can't allow that," said the sheriff. "I can't allow you to go in there. He might take a shot at you."

"That's a risk I must take," said Dr. Quest. "Golas may be a stupid, quarrelsome fellow, but I can't leave a dangerous python loose on his land. Especially as he seems to think a python is something you hit on the head with a stick."

"Well, if you're so set on goin' in there, guess I'll go with you," said the sheriff.

AT DAWN they were moving silently through the wet and reeking swamp. The morning mist hung over the thick rushes, making poor visibility worse. The sheriff held a shotgun on his hip and disliked the whole business. He had hunted armed robbers with less apprehension than he felt now. He was thigh-deep in brush, he trod on unseen roots and every moment he expected a big angry snake to rear up in his face.

The two pigs, which they had driven into the swamp the night before, got up and ran ahead of them, squealing to wake the dead.

"That's bad," said Dr. Quest. "He must be too disturbed to feed. If we come upon him now, we'll have a fight on our hands."

They continued to hunt along the sedgy creek bank, under the big willows. The snake appeared to have vanished,

leaving no trail. They came to a pond-like widening of the creek with a small island in the middle of it. There was one big alder and bushes growing there.

"Likely he's there," said Dr. Quest.

"I'm not so sure," said the sheriff. "Doc, do snakes hunt people?"

"They have been known to follow men out of curiosity. Why?"

" 'Cause I've got a feeling we're being watched. I've got a mighty cold feeling down my back."

"We'll try the island," said Dr. Quest. "He might be in among the alder roots."

It was a disagreeable business, wading and sinking into the oozy bottom. At that moment the sheriff would have given a good deal to be out in the sunshine, on firm, clear ground. Dr. Quest floundered ahead and found better footing on the bar. They explored cautiously among the bushes and tangled roots and looked at the trunk of the alder to see if patches of bark had been scraped off. They found nothing.

"Not here," said Dr. Quest. "He must have slipped out of the swamp. Now we'll have to—"

A branch above his head cracked and fell down. The silence of the swamp was blasted by the roar of a heavy rifle.

The sheriff flung himself at Quest's legs and dragged him down into cover.

"Golas! No wonder I felt we were being followed. He's got us on an island, too—we can't get off without showing ourselves."

"But what does he think he's doing?"

"Don't know—but it isn't healthy to let him see us."

Dr. Quest rose to his knees behind the tree trunk and cautiously put his head out. "Golas!" he called, "listen—"

The rifle crashed and a bullet sent his hat skimming.

"Mad as a coot," said the sheriff.

They crawled on their bellies into the thickest part of the underbrush and lay there. Suddenly Golas broke his silence and began to yell at them. "Come out there, you sneakin' spyin' bastards! I know you're there! Come out and I'll make you sorry!" He was walking up and down on the opposite shore, crashing through the brush, firing his rifle at random into the island.

"Wish I'd brought a rifle," said the sheriff, "I'd make him sorry."

He lay pressed into the mud, pestered by mosquitoes and crawling things, growing steadily angrier. He was thinking of Golas and the venom he had spread all his life; of the wife he had worked to death; the daughter whose childhood had been despoiled. A bullet struck a branch near his head, a splinter cut his cheek.

"I'll put a stop to this right now." He rolled to his knees.

At that instant the swamp echoed and re-echoed to a frightful cry, a fearful sound that froze the sheriff in the act of rising.

"The snake!" cried Dr. Quest. He rose instantly and ran splashing through the water. The sheriff caught his foot on a root and fell, the gun flying from his hand. It was a moment before he could find it in the grass. He rushed after Dr. Quest.

On the other bank stood a great tree. For a moment they could see neither snake nor man, they caught a glimpse of a gray face with open mouth and staring eyes rising out of a bloated, yellow-brown jacket. Neck and chest were enwrapped by the python's coils. The sheriff heard Golas give an agonized wheeze and a great blunt head rose at them. He fired at a range of six feet and knew that he had missed. It came at them hissing, with eyes as red as coals, and he fired again and saw the head jump with the impact of the full charge. It sank down, oozing.

Dr. Quest seized the neck, pulling it away. It took their united strength to ease the pressure of those terrible coils. Then they saw there was no need to hurry. Golas was beyond help . . .

With gentle hands, Dr. Quest stretched the python to its full length. The sunlight showed its gorgeous coloring, a tapestry beyond the conception of man, an interweaving of yellow, brown and black, covered by a sort of bloom.

The sheriff took a good look at it. He was beginning to understand Dr. Quest's admiration. "I'm sorry I had to shoot."

"You had to," said Dr. Quest. "But he is handsome, isn't he?"

"Useful, too," said the sheriff. "Next time I meet a snake, I'll just raise my hat and pass on."

THE TRAIL AHEAD

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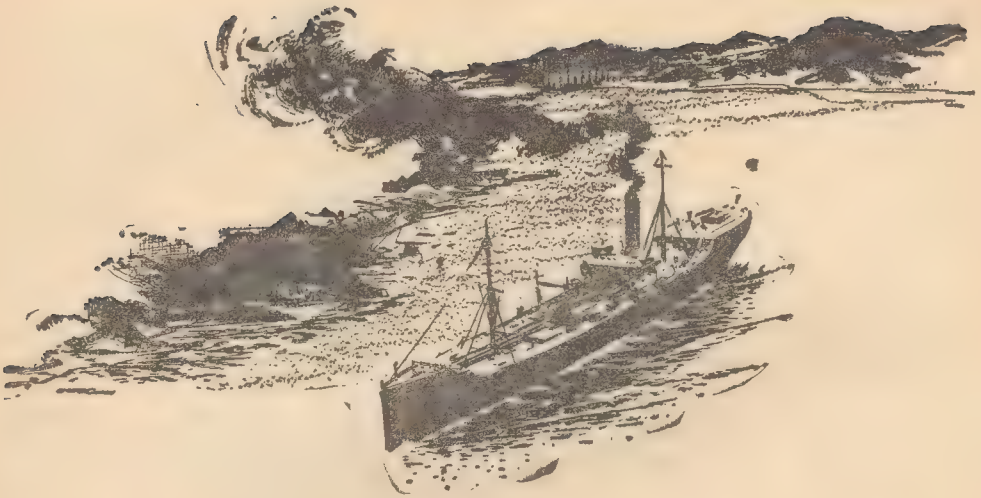

ASK ADVENTURE

Information You Can't Get Elsewhere

WE'VE received so many letters recently from men interested in getting the facts about the Merchant Marine that we asked our Ask Adventure expert to send us detailed information to run in this department. Here's what Mr. Salyer has to say about the opportunities open to young men in the Merchant Marine Cadet Corps. Sounds like a mighty exciting future for those who can make the grade.

Four years of travel and education with all expenses paid—plus a minimum salary of $65.00 a month! That's the golden apple that Uncle Sam dangles before the bulging eyes of young men with aspirations to see the world via the Merchant Marine.

Many biographies of adventurers, writers and other public figures contain a line to the effect that the subject worked his way to Europe on a cattle boat a generation ago, and the reader of such biographies immediately conjures up scenes of adventure and romance beyond his own reach. But long gone are the "good old days" when a young fellow could nursemaid a barnful of cows across the Atlantic to pay for his crossing and a summer of sight-seeing in Europe.

Agreements between labor unions and the shipping companies today preclude the signing on of a "workaway" for a voyage to such adventure and romance. In fact, it is almost impossible for a man stranded in a foreign port to sign on as a workaway in order to get back home. The unions are jealously guarding every berth on a vessel for their dues-paying members. And now, due to the over supply of men trained for the swollen wartime merchant fleet, there are about three men for every job.

The smart way for a young man to see the world and get his fill of romance and adventure in foreign lands is to join the United States Merchant Marine Cadet Corps.

I am writing from personal experience when I say that the cadets have the time of their lives in foreign ports. I have never sailed as a cadet, but I have had cadets assigned to me in ships I have sailed in as Chief Officer. And as I took my boys on tours of such exotic, far-flung spots as Singapore, Manila, Panama, Abadan, Alexandria, Naples and scores of other ports, I was very envious of them. For they were doing their sight-seeing at the expense of Uncle Sam, while I had to come up through the "hawsepipe", and had to spend much of the time during my early years at sea painting and scaling while my ship was in port, with not too much time devoted to sight-seeing.

A candidate for admission to the Cadet Corps must be an unmarried male citizen of the United States, native-born or naturalized at least 10 years prior to the date of filing application.

Boys applying for admission must be over 16½ years of age and less than 21 in order to take the scholastic test, and they must be at least 17 when ordered to take the physical examination. Men honorably discharged from the armed forces and the merchant marine are granted an age adjustment up to

the twenty-fourth birthday and are also allowed a dividend of five points additional on the competitive scholastic examination.

If a youngster wants to take advantage of this wonderful opportunity, he must also produce evidence that he has fifteen units from an accredited high school, which are as follows: two in mathematics (including one in algebra, one in plane geometry), three in English, one in science (except biology), and nine electives.

The competitive examinations for admission are prepared and corrected by the Carnegie Foundation. They are administered by the Civil Service Commission in April and November of each year at Post Offices and Federal Buildings throughout the United States, its possessions and territories. After correcting the examinations, the Carnegie Foundation then turns the results over to the Academy and the candidates are then notified of their score. An examination conducted in this manner eliminates political preference, that disease peculiar to our brand of democracy.

Boys who pass the scholastic test are then ordered to report to the nearest Navy establishment for a Naval Reserve physical examination for appointment as Midshipman, United States Naval Reserve (inactive). The appointments to the Cadet Corps are made on the basis of standings made in the competitive examination and according to state quotas based on population.

A successful candidate is ordered to one of the Cadet Basic Schools, either at Pass Christian, Mississippi, or San Mateo, California, and sworn in as a Cadet-Midshipman. Expenses incurred by the candidate in traveling to the Cadet School are paid by the Government, at the rate of 5 cents a mile, only after the Cadet-Midshipman has satisfactorily completed his first year (Fourth Class) of training.

After arrival at the Cadet School he goes through a short indoctrination period and then plunges into a highly professional curriculum. If he chooses the deck department he will specialize in such subjects as navigation, seamanship, cargo stowage and other subjects related to that department; if he wants to become an engineer he will study steam, diesel and electrical engineering. All cadets study physics, mathematics, English, history and other subjects of college standard, for at the end of his four years a cadet will receive the Bachelor of Science degree.

Most of the cadet's work during his first year forms a basis for his second year's activities (Third Class), which is spent entirely at sea. Upon the completion of his first year he is assigned to a ship—tanker, freighter, or passenger vessel—and spends the next twelve months seeing the world. He is paid $82.50 while aboard ship, plus quarters and food. He lives in the officers' quarters and eats in the officers' mess; in fact, he is considered an officer. He has an eight-hour day at sea, just as the officers have, six hours devoted to ship's work and 2 hours allotted for study. During his six hours he may do anything from helping the boatswain splice a wire cable to taking a noon sight.

Again, speaking from my own experience, I found it best to let my cadets work with the boatswain and the deck force for about half of their time aboard the ship. During this first six months they learned ship maintenance, painting, sujeeing, chipping and scaling, splicing manila and wire, small boat handling and numerous other manual labor jobs. The last half of the time, I assigned them to the bridge, where they stood regular watches with the mates, took sights of the sun, moon, stars and planets. On my last ship I had a cadet who could out-navigate every mate on the ship. He was really a bright boy and loved to shoot those heavenly bodies.

And when we made port, I usually took the cadets on tours which included places of historical interest, bazaars and shops, and a night club in the evening.

Last year I was running between Panama and various island groups in the Western Pacific. During one stop at Balboa, my cadet got orders from the Cadet Corps District Instructor stationed in Panama to start studying Spanish. So he and the engine cadet, who was under the wing of the First Assistant Engineer, picked up a couple of Spanish grammars at a book store in Panama City.

On the voyage out to the islands and back I spent three hours a week teaching them Spanish, for I had studied the language in college and had a pretty good working knowledge of it. When we returned to Panama, the boys practised on the defenseless natives the things I had taught them about Spanish. But the natives merely shrugged their shoulders in a Latin sort of way and made a circular motion with their index fingers pointed at their heads, which means "crazy" in any language.

But it wasn't long until the boys acquired a Spanish vocabulary big enough to get along. Between my inexpert tutelage and the fencing they had to do with the Panamanians in order to be understood, they soon learned. By the end of their year with me they could order a meal in Spanish without a hitch. And when they returned to the States they were asked to instruct the less fortunate cadets who had not been lucky enough to duel with the native practitioners of the Spanish art.

Upon completion of the Cadet-Midshipman's year at sea, he is ordered to the Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point, Long Island, about 30 miles from New York. Incidentally, my Spanish-speaking cadets were ordered back to the States before the ship returned, so they were relieved in Panama and flown back in high-style in one of the luxurious Pan-American clippers. That, too, beats tending a herd of cattle across the ocean!

The Cadet-Midshipman spends his third and fourth years (Second and First Classes) pursuing an advanced academic course of instruction at the Academy, a permanent es-

tablishment consisting of sixty acres of grounds and many modern buildings which provide every imaginable facility for the training of officers for the Merchant Marine.

Although it is the youngest of the service schools, Kings Point is on a par with Annapolis, West Point and the Coast Guard Academy at New London. The faculty is composed of carefully selected officers of the Merchant Marine and Navy, and other specialists who are eminently able to instruct the cadets in the required subjects. All the subjects are on a college plane. Recently, Congress passed a law permitting the Academy to grant a Bachelor of Science degree as soon as it is accredited by the various associations of colleges. It is undergoing creditation now—a process which includes enlargement of the library, the inclusion of more degrees on the faculty, and the establishment of better facilities for biology and physics laboratories. It is expected that the incoming class will be the first to receive degrees. If this works out as planned, the Academy will have been accredited four years from date of application to the various associations. The Naval Academy required seven years.

Academy teams compete with major colleges in football, baseball, tennis, swimming and other sports. Great stress is placed on intra-mural athletics so that all cadets may take advantage of the benefits to be derived from physical competition on the playing fields.

Every year the Academy's training ship makes a training cruise to a different part of the world. The cruises were suspended during the war but were resumed last winter with a cruise to the Caribbean and the north and east coasts of South America. The ship returned from that cruise with a cargo of sun-tanned youths who left a string of broken hearts behind them in all the exotic ports along those storied shores. Among the ports touched were Port-of-Spain, Rio de Janeiro, Barranquilla, Colon and Havana.

Under present plans at the Academy there will be four cruises every year for First Classmen. The first will include Washington, Norfolk and Bermuda; the second cruise will call at Gloucester, Portland, Nantucket and Halifax; the third will be an eight-week foreign cruise beginning September 22; and the last cruise trip in the program will be a cruise to foreign ports and will also be of eight weeks duration beginning January 1. It is expected that next year's foreign cruises will include major European ports.

A high spot of the cruise to South America was a basket-ball game between the cadets and the Naval Academy of Brazil. The Kings Point cadets won by a score of 33 to 31. And there are rumors making the rounds that they won because they had done some pretty good pre-game work in alienating the affections of the Brazilian maidens. All the girls cheered for the Americans and this so maddened the Brazilian players that they couldn't see the basket. Incidentally, the Brazilian team is the best in South America.

At the Academy the deck candidate continues his studies in navigation, seamanship, communications, cargo stowage, admiralty law, international law and commercial law, and other subjects allied to deck activities. Engineer cadets receive further instruction in steam, electrical and diesel engineering, machine shop practice and other subjects having to do with the field of marine engineering. Both the deck and engine cadets are instructed further in Naval Science and Tactics, foreign and domestic trade, Spanish, French, history and science subjects common to both the deck and engine departments.

Upon successfully completing the four-year course and all examinations, the Cadet-Midshipman is graduated with the Bachelor of Science degree (depending upon creditation of the Academy). He also receives a license as Third Mate or Third Assistant Engineer, depending upon which department he specialized in, and he receives a commission as Ensign in the United States Maritime Service as well as a commission as Ensign in the United States Naval Reserve.

He is now qualified to hold a sea-going berth which pays approximately $300.00 a month, plus subsistence. And this is the lowest salary he will receive at sea. He can go on up the ladder to Master of Chief Engineer and earn around $600.00 a month.

Many of the graduates of the Academy, after building up a little sea experience, take such responsible shore positions as Port Captain, Port Engineer, Marine Superintendent, or Foreign Representative for a shipping company; some enter the export-import business or take posts in Government service, both at home and abroad.

Surely, four years of travel and study at the expense of Uncle Sam beats the sea-going cow business of yesteryear.

A GUN for Billy the Kid.

Query:—The article, "Handguns of Glory" in the September issue of *Adventure* did not mention any .41 caliber revolvers. I have a Colt .41 six shot, Army special, made at Hartford, Conn., Pat. August 5, 1884—June 5, 1900—July 4, 1905—No. 302828. This gun is 11⅝" long with a 6" barrel.

Was this model ever used by the Army, and if so, when?

—T. F. Donnelly
420 7th St.
New Kensington, Penna.

Reply by Donegan Wiggins:—The old Colt .41 made gunfighting history and no mistake.

I judge the cartridge and the revolver to handle it, the Colt Lightning, Double action, or, as some called them "Bird-Head" or "Parrot-beak", were placed on the market about 1880, as it is an established fact that Billy the Kid had one in his left hand when Pat Garrett downed him that night at Fort Lincoln, N.M. Territory. The same weapon was also made in .32 and .38 Colt Short and Long centerfire, as well as the Short and Long .41.

The first revolvers had a rounded butt, hence the name, "Bird-head", and were furnished with barrels of various lengths, my own being a 4" .41; the usual ones seen, however, had a 6" barrel, with side rod ejector.

The mechanism was rather delicate, and got out of order more frequently than did the good old Single-Action Army and Frontier, Colt's best handgun, in my humble opinion. I never have known of the Government using this model as a Service pistol, although I understand they *did* have some .45's in a similar type, considerably larger, made up for the Philippine Rebellion about 1900. Neither type, however, seems to have been made since about 1904, as that is the last Colt catalogue in which these revolvers were listed and described. The .41 caliber seems to have been dropped by Colt's in favor of the more accurate .38 Special cartridge today. But its flat-nosed slug made it a fearfully effective arm at close range.

JUST hold your nose and holler!

Query:—Could you please tell me how to construct an elk bugle for the purpose of luring elk into rifle range?

This instrument is similar to a moose call, and I have heard of one that was made from bamboo, but I have no idea as to its construction. I would prefer to make it from this, as I already have some on hand.

—William B. Kendall
Kew, P.O., Alta, Can.

Reply by Arthur Carhart:—The best elk bugle imitation I ever heard was by an old woodsman, who held his nose, started to yell at about middle "C" pitch and ended up by whistling the final high notes through his teeth.

I have heard of an artificial call such as you describe, but never have used one. Information I've dug up says that such a call can be made out of a tube about ¾" inside diameter, with one end plugged. Then you make a plug at the top to fit into the open end of the tube, and cut a notch in the tube, straight side of the notch toward the top of the "whistle" as you would in making one of those old willow whistles kids make by pounding and slipping the bark. Shave the side of the plug and keep testing it for aperture through which you will blow, until you get the right sort of whistling. I can't give you much advice about this, but the claim is, that if you construct this gadget right, and have enough wind, you can get three tones out of it, starting with the low tone, then with more force in blowing the next higher note, and finally the much higher note, which should be some two octaves higher than the first note. With that rather scanty information, the rest of the deal seems to lie in the field of your having a try at it and experimenting until you get something that sounds like a bull elk on the rut.

I presume that the difference in tones produced by the lesser or more forceful blowing, is based on the principle of "harmonics." That is, with one pressure the column of air in the tube vibrates as a unit, with higher pressure as two units, and finally with higher pressure still, as three units. So there is the trick, to get this thing fitted so you'll throw the air column into first full vibration, and then the subsequent harmonics. Sounds complicated and I'd guess it is. But you may want to try it.

If you don't, try that trick of holding your nose, start with the voice, jump your voice tone an octave, and whistle the final gusty note through your teeth. I've made a deer call that works like everything, and if you get the right combination, an elk bugle imitation ought to get you a big set of antlers.

"A PORE benighted 'eathen, but a first-class fighting man—"

Query:—I would like to know if there is a tribe of natives in Africa known as the Fuzzie-wuzzies. If so, in what part of Africa are they found? Is Fuzzie-wuzzy their proper name? Or is it just a nickname?

—Fred Williams
Chester, Penna.

Reply by Capt. H. W. Eades:—"Fuzzy-wuzzy" is the British soldier's nickname for the typical Soudanese (native African) warrior, from his method of dressing his hair. They are chiefly Mohammedan, and fanatically brave when fighting the Christian "unbeliever", and led by priests or "holy men," as in the time of the "Mahdi," whose forces were beaten by Kitchener and his men at the battle of Omdurman. Their chief weapons at the time, and even today, are a huge shovel-headed spear or a great two-handed sword. Many of the Abyssinian tribes who fought with Haile Selassie against the Italians were of this same group, had the same method of dressing the hair and carried the same weapons.

The following is a verse from Kipling's "Barrack-Room Ballads"—

"So 'ere's to you, Fuzzy-wuzzy, at your 'ome in the Soudan,
You're a pore benighted 'eathen, but a first-class fighting man,
An' 'ere's to you, Fuzzy-wuzzy, with your 'ayrick 'ead of 'air,
You big, black, boundin' beggar, for you broke a British square."

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American Folklore and Legend: *Songs, dances, regional customs; African survivals, religious sects; voodoo*—HAROLD PREECE, c/o *Adventure*.

Archery—EARL B. POWELL, c/o *Adventure*.

Auto Racing—WILLIAM CAMPBELL GAULT, 4828 N. Elkhart Ave., Milwaukee 11, Wis.

Baseball—FREDERICK LIEB, c/o *Adventure*.

Basketball—STANLEY CARHART, 99 Broad St., Mattawan, N. J.

Big Game Hunting in North America: *Guides and equipment*—A. H. CARHART, c/o *Adventure*.

Boxing—COL. JEAN V. GROMBACH, c/o *Adventure*.

Camping and Outdoor Cookery—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Canoeing—H. S. M. KEMP, 501 10th St., E., Prince Albert, Sask., Canada.

Coins and Medals—WILLIAM L. CLARK, American Numismatic Society, Broadway at 156th, N. Y. C.

Fencing—COL. JEAN V. GROMBACH, c/o *Adventure*.

Fishing, Fresh water: *Fly and bait casting; bait casting outfits; fishing trips*—JOHN ALDEN KNIGHT, 929 W. 4th St., Williamsport, Penna.

Fishing, Salt water: *Bottom fishing, surf casting; trolling; equipment and locations*—C. BLACKBURN MILLER, c/o *Adventure*.

Fly and Bait Casting Tournaments—"CHIEF" STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Maine.

Hiking—DR. CLAUDE P. FORDYCE, c/o *Adventure*.

Horses and Horsemanship — JOHN RICHARD YOUNG, c/o *Adventure*.

Motor Boating—GERALD T. WHITE, Montville, N. J.

Motorcycling: *Regulations, mechanics, racing*—CHARLES M. DODGE, c/o *Adventure*.

Rifles, Pistols, Revolvers: *American and Foreign*—DONEGAN WIGGINS, 170 Liberty Rd., Salem, Oregon.

Shotguns: *American and foreign; wing shooting and field trials; gunsmithing*—ROY S. TINNEY, Brielle, N. J.

Skiing—WILLIAM C. CLAPP, The Mountain Book Shop, North Conway, N. H.

Small Boating: *Skiffs, outboard, small launch, river and lake cruising*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif.

Swimming—LOUIS DEB. HANDLEY, 115 West 11th St., N. Y., N. Y.

Track—JACKSON SCHOLZ, R. D. No. 1, Doylestown, Pa.

Woodcraft—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.

Wrestling—MURL E. THRUSH, New York Athletic Club, 59th St. and 7th Ave., N. Y., N. Y.

SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL SUBJECTS

Anthropology: *American, north of the Panama Canal; customs, dress, architecture, pottery and decorative arts, weapons and implements, fetishism, social divisions*—ARTHUR WOODWARD, Los Angeles Museum, Exposition Park, Los Angeles, Calif.

Entomology: *Insects and spiders; venomous and disease-carrying insects*—DR. S. W. FROST, 465 E. Foster Ave., State College, Penna.

Forestry, North American: *The U. S. Forestry Service, our national forests, conservation and use*—A. H. CARHART, c/o *Adventure*.

Forestry, Tropical: *Tropical forests and products*—WM. R. BARBOUR, care of U. S. Forest Service, Glenn Bldg., Atlanta, Ga.

Herpetology: *Reptiles and amphibians*—CLIFFORD H. POPE, c/o *Adventure*.

Mining, Prospecting, and Precious Stones: *Anywhere in North America, Prospectors' outfitting; any mineral, metallic or non-metallic*—VICTOR SHAW, c/o *Adventure*.

Photography: *Outfitting, work in out-of-the way places; general information*—PAUL L. ANDERSON, 36 Washington St., East Orange, N. J.

Radio: *Telegraphy, telephony history; receiver construction, portable sets*—DONALD MCNICOL, c/o *Adventure.*

Railroads: *In the United States, Mexico and Canada*—R. T. NEWMAN, 701 N. Main St., Paris, Ill.

Sawmilling: HAPSBURG LIEBE, c/o *Adventure.*

Taxidermy—EDWARD B. LANG, 14 N. Burnett St., East Orange, N. J.

Wildcrafting and Trapping—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif.

MILITARY, NAVAL AND POLICE

United States Army—COL. R. G. EMERY, U.S.A. Ret., c/o *Adventure.*

United States Coast Guard—LIEUT. C. B. LEMON, U.S.C.G., Ret., Box 221, Equinunk, Wayne Co., Penna.

United States Marine Corps—MAJ. ROBERT H. RANKIN, U.S.M.C.R., c/o *Adventure.*

United States Navy—LIEUT. DURAND KIEFER, U.S.N., Ret., Box 74, Del Mar, Calif.

Merchant Marine—KERMIT W. SALYER, c/o *Adventure.*

Military Aviation—O. B. MYERS, c/o *Adventure.*

Federal Investigation Activities—*Secret Service, Immigration, Customs, Border Patrol, etc.*—FRANCIS H. BENT, c/o *Adventure.*

The French Foreign Legion—GEORGES SURDEZ, c/o *Adventure.*

Royal Canadian Mounted Police—H. S. M. KEMP, 501 10th St., E., Prince Albert, Sask., Canada.

State Police—FRANCIS H. BENT, c/o *Adventure.*

GEOGRAPHICAL SUBJECTS

★New Guinea—L. P. B. ARMIT, c/o *Adventure.*

★New Zealand, Cook Island, Samoa—TOM L. MILLS, 27 Bowen St., Feilding, New Zealand.

★Australia and Tasmania—ALAN FOLEY, 243 Elizabeth St., Sydney, Australia.

★South Sea Islands—WILLIAM MCCREADIE, No. 1 Flat "Scarborough," 83 Sidney Rd., Manley, N. S. W., Australia.

Hawaii, Christmas, Wake, Canton, Midway and Palmyra Islands—CARL J. KUNZ, 211-3 Naska, Kahului, Maui, T.H.

Africa, Part 1 ★*Libya, Morocco, Egypt, Tunis, Algeria, Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*—CAPT. H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C. **2** *Abyssinia, Italian Somaliland, British Somali Coast Protectorate, Eritrea, Uganda, Tanganyika, Kenya*—GORDON MACCREAGH, c/o *Adventure.* **3** *Tripoli, Sahara caravans*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, c/o *Adventure.* **4** *Bechuanaland, Southern Africa, Angola, Belgian Congo, Egyptian Sudan and French West Africa*—MAJOR S. L. GLENISTER, c/o *Adventure.* **5** ★*Cape Province, Orange Free State, Natal, Zululand, Transvaal, Rhodesia*—PETER FRANKLIN, Box 1491, Durban, Natal, So. Africa.

★**Madagascar**—RALPH LINTON, Dept. of Anthropology, Columbia University, N. Y., N. Y.

Asia, Part 1 ★*Siam, Malay States, Straits Settlements, Java, Sumatra, Dutch East Indies, Ceylon*—V. B. WINDLE, Box 813, Rancho Santa Fe, Calif. **2** *Persia, Arabia*—CAPTAIN BEVERLY-GIDDINGS, c/o *Adventure.* **3** ★*Palestine*—CAPTAIN H. W. EADES, 3808 West 26th Ave., Vancouver, B. C. **4** ★*Afghanistan, Northern India, Kashmir, Khyber Pass*—ROLAND WILD, Savage Club, 1 Carlton House Terrace, London, S.W.1, England.

Europe, Part 1 ★*The British Isles*—THOMAS BOWEN PARTINGTON, Constitutional Club, Northumberland Ave., London, W. C. 2, England.

South America, Part 1 *Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile*—EDGAR YOUNG, c/o *Adventure.* **2** ★*Argentina*—ALLISON WILLIAMS BUNKLEY, c/o *Adventure.* **3** *Brazil*—ARTHUR J. BURKS, c/o *Adventure.*

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Alaska—FRANK RICHARDSON PIERCE, c/o *Adventure.*

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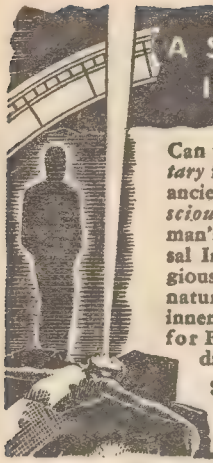
Middle Western U. S.—*Lower Mississippi from St. Louis down, Louisiana Swamps, St. Francis, Arkansas Bottom*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif.

Eastern U. S. Part 1 *Maine*—"CHIEF STANWOOD, East Sullivan, Me. **2** *Vt., N. H., Conn., R. I., Mass.*—HOWARD R. VOIGHT, P. O. Box 716, Woodmont, Conn. **3** *Adirondacks, New York*—RAYMOND S. SPEARS, 11331 Burin Ave., Inglewood, Calif. **4** *Ala., Tenn., Miss., N. C., S. C., Fla., Ga.*—HAPSBURG LIEBE, c/o *Adventure.* **5** *The Great Smokies and Appalachian Mountains south of Virginia*—PAUL M. FINK, Jonesboro, Tenn.



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(Continued from page 8)

escape from Devil's Island. Various other items appeared subsequently in *The New York Times* and historical magazines, and in 1941 an admiring friend contended that what I didn't know about aerial warfare would fill a book. I promptly wrote the book ("Douhet and Aerial Warfare"; Putnam's, 1941) and the far from flighty critic of *The Infantry Journal* instantly agreed with my friend. Despite this we now have an independent air arm and a unfied Department of Defense.

Turning to the War Between the States, I wrote "Belle Boyd, Confederate Spy" (Dietz Press, Richmond, Va., 1944). This involved so much research that my wife sought a pension on the ground that she had lost her husband in "Stonewall" Jackson's capture of Front Royal, Va., in 1862.

As to my current item about Andy Jackson, this came about through Walter Raleigh and Aaron Burr, whose treason trials play an important part in a book under way. Reading up on my native state's ill-fated and much maligned son, I enjoyed the irrepressible way his friend Andy used his wits and weapons, and thought *Adventure's* readers would too. Parton and other works on Jackson are my sources.

Burr and Jackson had a momentary misunderstanding themselves in 1806 and had they met on the field of honor the encounter would have been epic. "Little Burr" did more, of course, than meet Hamilton. That duel was simply the last of a series of five. In one Burr met a brother-in-law of Hamilton, in another he crossed swords with a Federalist henchman, in the next two adherents of Burr had bloody fights with DeWitt Clinton and Richard Riker, and in the fifth the two real principals finally met and Burr ended two careers with one bullet.

COLONEL R. G. EMERY, whose exciting story of the Red menace in Alaska opens the magazine this month, queried us a while back on the problem of eradicating the scourge of rabbits in Australia. His question was prompted by the late Albert Richard Wetjen's story, "Camel Patrol," which told of this peculiar problem. Colonel Emery wanted to know why it would not be feasible to eliminate the fourfooted nuisances through endemic diseases deliberately introduced by competent government authorities. We didn't know—so we asked our Ask Adventure expert on Australia and Tasmania, Alan Foley, who writes as follows—

I was interested in Colonel Emery's suggestion as to a possible means of eradicating

the rabbit pest in Australia. The Colonel raises an interesting point, and one which I took up with our Department of Agriculture whose Director gives me some informative sidelights on the subject. He tells me that it has long been recognized that wild fauna from time to time do suffer from naturally recurring epidemics of disease and that their numbers are greatly reduced thereby; although he doubts whether there is any case on record where animal species have been eradicated in this way. As far as the United States plagues which decimate rabbits are concerned, information regarding them is not very clear, but the different plagues in different areas appear to have been due to different causes, and no one disease has been found responsible. There are records of similar diseases of plague proportions having destroyed thousands of rabbits in past years in New South Wales. The actual conditions which have led to endemic infections assuming plague proportions are not known and it would be most difficult, if not impossible, to reproduce them artificially over a wide area. The eradication or reduction of the rabbit population of Australia by infectious disease has been investigated on a number of occasions, but the infectious agents used, although capable of killing rabbits under experimental conditions, have failed to make any appreciable reduction in rabbit population. Our Director of Agriculture says that considerable study is being given by epidemologists to the sudden appearance and just as sudden disappearance of epizootic diseases in wild animals, and possibly in due course as a result of this work, the conditions favorable for the rapid spread of such diseases may be ascertained. It may then be found possible to create epizootic outbreaks artificially.

Sure is hard to keep them rabbits from doin' what comes natcherly!

AND another AA expert, Philip Godsell, is right on his toes to let us know we allowed an error to slip into the magazine in Norman Wiltsey's fact story on the stubborn Indians who held up the progress of the Canadian Pacific Railway—"The Lodge-Pole Battle." Seems we had the right railroad and the right Indian chief, but the wrong tribe of redskins!

I read with interest Norman Wiltsey's story entitled "The Lodge-Pole Battle" in the October issue of *Adventure* and since I am well acquainted with the band of Indians to which Chief Piapot belonged it occurred to me that you might be interested in a few comments.

As a matter of fact it was the Fort Qu'appelle band of Plains Crees and not

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the Blackfeet who were involved in the incident reported by Mr. Wiltsey. Piapot was the head chief of this band at the time and they were roaming about what is now the Province of Saskatchewan, but was at that time still a part of the Northwest Territories, trading principally at Fort Qu'appelle and the Hudson's Bay Company's post at Touchwood Hills. I happen to be acquainted with Piapot's descendants who live in the vicinity of Lebret, about six miles from the present town of Qu'appelle, Saskatchewan. Word of Piapot's attempt to hold up construction work on the C.P.R. was wired to North West Mounted Police headquarters at Regina, and the Commissioner wired instructions to the detachment at Maple Creek.

Trouble did occur with the Blackfeet as the steel neared Blackfoot Crossing, where the present town of Gleichen stands, but this was some time later. Crowfoot, the head chief of the Blackfoot nation, developed a sore throat, which the young bucks and medicine men were convinced arose from the smoke from the palefaces' Fire Wagon. Medicine was rushed to the ailing chieftain by the Mounted Police, who fortunately recovered from his touch of quinsy, after which no further attempt was made to obstruct construction.

AND Mr. Wiltsey confesses his error—

I appreciate your forwarding Mr. Godsell's interesting letter setting me right on Chief Piapot and his outfit. As a matter of fact I was expecting just such a communication. Only recently, in Blackfoot Chief Buffalo Child Long Lance's splendid book, "Long Lance," I ran across a brief mention of Piapot and his "band of Crees." After making that discovery, I knew that it was only a matter of time until some lynx-eyed *Adventure* reader wrote in to tell me what-for!

My original informant, a retired R.C.M.P. corporal living in Montreal, referred to Piapot's band as Blackfeet. Evidently the old gentleman's memory was a bit hazy on that score. Weeks after the yarn was in print I learned the truth from Chief Long Lance's book—and just sat back resignedly and waited for the lightning to hit me.

MANY thanks to Mr. Godsell for catching us up and correcting what may seem to be a minor point, but we do try hard to maintain *Adventure's* reputation for authenticity and accuracy—not always with complete success. When we do pull a boner we want to know it. And remember, as we mentioned last month, we're mighty anxious to hear from you about any feature of the magazine. We'd like to print some of those letters right here in *Camp-Fire*.—K.W.G.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE: We offer this department to readers who wish to get in touch again with friends or acquaintances separated by years or chance. Give your own name and full address. Please notify *Adventure* immediately should you establish contact with the person you are seeking. Space permitting, each inquiry addressed to *Lost Trails* will be run in three consecutive issues. Requests by and concerning women are declined as not considered effective in a magazine published for men. *Adventure* also will decline any notice that may not seem a sincere effort to recover an old friendship, or that may not seem suitable to the editors for any other reason. No charge is made for publication of notices.

Anybody knowing the whereabouts of a man known as Indian Shorty who lives in or around Cottonwood, Calif., please contact Stanley E. Ehrman, 1042 Daisy Ave., Long Beach, Calif.

I would like to locate Edward McMenamin, once known as Collins in the fight ring. He is about 5'6", red hair, and was last heard of in Baltimore and Pittsburgh. Please write R. Essick, 6629 S. Ashland Ave., Chicago, Ill.

Would be pleased to contact Charles J. Arch. Worked with him at Indio, Calif., during the latter part of World War I. Write E. H. Douglas, 533 Towne Ave., Los Angeles, Calif.

I would appreciate any information about R. S. Saulter. Has been in Emporia, Kansas, and worked in Frisco and Oakland, Calif. Contact Harry Johnson, Jr., Oneals, Calif.

Would like any information about Oscar S. Moss, last heard of in Beaumont, Texas. He is 5'6" tall, brown hair and eyes, ruddy complexion. Please contact L. C. Cunningham, Rt. 2, Box 39, Richmond, Texas.

I would like to find Alvin G. Grate, native of Missouri. If living, he is about sixty-five years old. Served with me in Co. G, First Arizona Infantry on the Mexican border in '16 and '17. He was last heard of in Feather River Country of California, 1922. Please write Capt. Emmett DeHoff, 27th Installations Sqdn., Kearney Air Force Base, Kearney, Neb.

I would appreciate contacting any of the following men, Charles Barton, John Martin, Alfred Werner, Frank Hittinger, or any other men who served in the 8th Co., CAC Coast Defense of Cristobal; also James Lipscomb, Fred Sweitzer, John Clark, Josef Dutka, Adolph Cole, who served in the 31st Co., CAC Fort Caswell, North Carolina. Please write to A. Trittinger, 1374 Amar St., San Pedro, California.

Please locate my brother, Harley Raymond Beehler, tall, fair complexion, about 35 or 40. Contact Gerald Beehler, 516 E. Dutton St., Kalamazoo, Mich.

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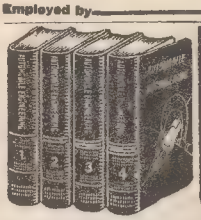

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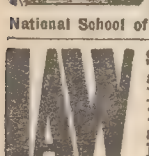

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(Continued from page 109)

Anyway, I had the draw works on my hands. I guess I should have shut it off and got out of the way like the others, but I didn't. I eased Joe Hillman's screwball fishing tool down until I felt it nudge against the lost pipe.

It's like a blind man wearing boxing gloves looking for a pin, a fishing job like that. You let it down, make a stab, pull it up to see if you got anything. Usually you haven't, so you let it down again. That kind of stuff was keeping me busy, so I didn't have time to see much of the fight. Every once in a while I'd look up to see how it was going. Just like I figured. Joe Hillman didn't have a chance.

What surprised me was he lasted so long. They'd slide around there on the oily floor, and then there would be a crash. I knew what that meant. Hillman would be down again.

But he kept getting up. His face was a mess now. He'd stay on his knees until he got the blood wiped out of his eyes, then he'd push himself up and walk into it again. It was murder. Cold murder.

I knew it was about over—the crazy idea of clearing the well and everything else. The last time Hillman got up he didn't seem to know what he was doing. He managed to pull himself up on rubber legs and sway for a minute, but that was all. He couldn't even get his hands up. This was the end. He wouldn't get up again.

Spade McCoy waded in with that big right fist cocked. He had the same idea. He pulled that fist back like he was getting ready to tear the whole derrick down with one blow. But he didn't let it go.

From somewhere a voice howled over the noise of the engine. "We've got it! McCoy, we've got it!" It was a hoarse voice. It wasn't very pretty, but it was loud. It took a while to realize it was my voice.

McCOY held that fist an instant, trying to decide whether to tear Hillman's head off or see what I was yelling about. He decided to see. He dropped his hand and snatched the draw brake out of my hand.

I held my breath. I wasn't sure, you're

never sure about fishing jobs. But then I heard the groan of the engine as McCoy put on a little more power and I could tell. I could tell by his face too. He kept mumbling over and over, "We've got it! Sure as hell, we've got it!" Then he eased up on the power and turned to me. "How did you do it? What kind of tool have you got down there?"

I looked over at Joe Hillman. He was still wobbling around on rubber legs but he wasn't out. "The kid made it," I said. "He's crazy. He likes oil wells. He didn't want to see one go to hell on his account."

That jarred McCoy. He glared at Hillman as if he had never seen him before. Then he glared at the draw works. There was a lot of ticking going on inside his skull, but I couldn't tell what it meant.

"Hillman," he muttered. "So he made a tool that would clear it, huh?" I guess he decided then, to hell with all that thinking. He wheeled and glared at Hillman, then he let out a bellow—one of his ride-the-man-down bellows that he used when he tore into one of the crew. "Hey, you! Get on these draw works. If you don't have every stand of that pipe out of there by sundown you get docked a week's pay."

It was Hillman's turn to be jarred. He looked at McCoy carefully to see if he was kidding. He wasn't. Hillman took another swipe at the blood on his face and moved over and took the draw works without a word. He didn't grin, he didn't do anything. He was just a man on a job. Anyway, that's what he looked like.

"The rest of you!" McCoy bellowed at the crew. "Get to work and get that stuff out."

With that, he turned and stalked across the derrick floor, down the steps and toward the sedan. Joe Hillman looked at the big back for a minute before he switched on the power. His face still didn't show anything. He didn't have any love for McCoy for giving him his job back, or for any other reason. But I think they understood each other. The way a few crazy oil men understand each other. Joe Hillman jerked his head at the crew and said, "All right, get ready. We're coming out of the hole."

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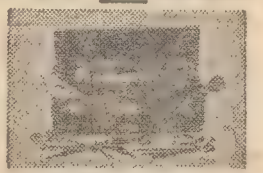

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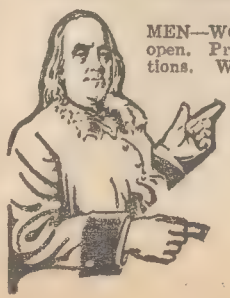

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(Continued from page 101)

Tennessee respectively in the United State Senate, met again in Washington and resumed their oldtime amity so completely that thereafter the gentleman from Missouri became one of "Old Hickory's" most ardent and effective political supporters. But Jesse Benton, a good hater, never forgave the man he held primarily responsible for the telltale scar on his buttocks. Nor did he forgive Tom for making up with Jackson.

When Andrew Jackson became President of the United States at the age of sixty-two, these lively incidents in his tempestuous career were far in the past. But they have never lost their significance as foreshadowing the exciting nature of his tempermental eight years in the presidency and of the subsequent period as head of the Democratic Party. And had these events happened differently, our history would unquestionably have been materially affected.

For instance, had Charles Dickinson or Jesse Benton killed Jackson, who would have succeeded John Quincy Adams as president and with what grave consequences for the nation? Or if Jackson's arm had been amputated, or he had killed Tom Benton, would he still have attained the office of chief magistrate? On some other points, no speculation whatever is needed. Had Tom Benton been killed in the fracas of September 4th, 1813, the career of John C. Fremont would inevitably have been different, his momentous explorations would doubtless not have taken place and in that event the development of the Far West would have been other than as we know it. For Tom Benton's daughter, who married Fremont, would not have been born and Fremont could not have written in his memoirs that his interviews with Senator Benton, the man who started him on his career, were "decisive of my life."

Jackson's terrific impact upon his environment and upon his age is incontestable. But for him to have lived to die in bed suggests that even in his case there is more truth than poetry in the verse that asserts there is a destiny that shapes our ends, hew them as we will.

THE END

(Continued from page 59)

have not changed. What happened is only the proof of what I once said. Here is strength and power to be used for good or evil."

Brian scowled. He said, "Gundolph, are men mostly good or evil?"

"Mostly good."

"Then we made no mistake in the building of the keep for mostly it will be a tower of strength for our people."

"Perhaps, Brian."

"What of the workman who told Sir Walter of the passage?"

"He was among those slain when you freed the king. Brian, you have perhaps changed the course of history, yet soon what happened here will become only a legend or may be forgotten. The king—"

"Let him speak for himself, Gundolph," said a voice from the other side.

Brian turned his head to look at the king. William of Normandy was smiling.

"And how is Sir Brian today?"

"Sir Brian?" Gundolph asked.

"Of course," said William of Normandy. "Could I have the Lieutenant of the Tower anything less than a knight of the realm?"

Brian couldn't believe he was hearing correctly but he must have been for the king was still talking.

"You will want a good guard, Sir Brian, and I can think of no better men to start with than those who came through the wall with you the other night. I must return to Normandy soon for a visit. I want to feel sure my keep is in good hands."

"It will be," said Gundolph. "What other man would have done as Brian the other night?"

The king scowled. "A good many, I hope. Not for me, but for England."

"For England," Brian nodded.

Yes, that was it. For England. Gundolph and the king moved away but Brian hardly knew they were gone. He closed his eyes and tried to remember how the keep had looked as he had seen it, white and shining in the morning sun two weeks before. Not his keep. Not William of Normandy's. But England's. And he was to have a part in the history which would be made here.

THE END

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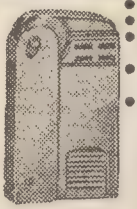

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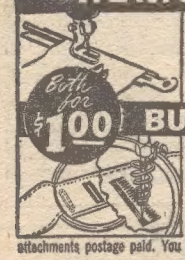

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(Continued from page 49)

catch Carr. I am to board *Dophin* as new steward. Shawn is to board *Dolphin* as passenger Tahiti to San Francisco. U. S. consul at Tahiti meets Mate Dobbs at police station there and gives him full report. Mate Dobbs is instructed that skipper is at least a thief and probably a murderer. If skipper throws one man overboard, maybe he tries it again. If we watch close, maybe we catch him. Shall I go to the brig now, Captain?"

Carr cursed him. "Get out!"

They went out. He bolted the door and sat staring at it, white-lipped. Why, he asked himself frantically, hadn't they arrested him at Honolulu? Probably because they supposed he'd long ago disposed of the pearls. In that case there'd be no evidence of fraud except the unsupported word of a fugitive. Neither could they convict him, without something else to go on, of killing Pond.

The real hazard, even now, was the pearls. They were locked in his safe. Otherwise there'd be only Shawn's word that they ever existed. Police at Frisco would come aboard with a search warrant. And find nothing. Because right now he must get rid of the pearls.

Carr took them from the same. Keeping the cabin locked and dark he waited an hour, till the deck was quiet.

Then warily he opened a porthole. Back went his arm to hurl the pearls through it and into the sea. He threw. Then came a chuckle from the deck. "Thanks, Captain." It was Kanala's voice taunting him. "I catch 'em in blanket. It is evidence. Also it is nice for Mr. Shawn. Now he can make lei of pearls for his wife."

Jefferson Carr never emerged from his cabin. Dobbs took command and a week later, just as the *Dolphin* pointed in through the Gate, those on deck heard a shot. Everyone knew what it was. Everyone, that is, except Joseph Shawn.

For Shawn wasn't there. He was in a boat being transferred to the pilot tug which had come out to meet them. A radiogram had told him she'd be on it—Myra. He could see her now, on the tug's deck, waving jubilantly, waiting to pilot him home.

THE END

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